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Towards a Definition of Persons and Relations: With Particular Reference to the Relational Ontology of John Zizioulas

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Abstract

The concern of this thesis is to develop greater clarity in the definition of the terms person and relation in the light of the recent interest in relational ontologies. John Zizioulas' book *Being as Communion* has had a significant effect on theological thought in the past ten years in both the East and the West. We explore his central notions of person and relation together with several modern theologians who also seek to develop a notion of the person, both divine and human, through a recovery of Trinitarian theology. The thesis begins with a discussion of the implications of a relational ontology with regards to the 'substance' or 'being' of God and includes a discussion of the question of the continuity between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*. From there we enter into the debate over Zizioulas' emphasis upon the Father as cause. In the second section of the thesis we move on to compare Zizioulas to Vladimir Lossky. In addressing the philosophical problem of the one and the many both thinkers affirm some of the concerns of existentialists and idealists. While Lossky attempts to balance the idealist concern for unity with the existentialist concern for particularity, Zizioulas seeks to establish a different paradigm in which unity and particularity are mutually constitutive. Zizioulas' use of an *analogia relationis* in contrast to Lossky's tendency to use an *analogia entis* has produced a more coherent model of theological anthropology. In the final section we discuss two crucial issues in the definition of persons and relations; the first is the significance of the fall in defining human personhood; the second is the realisation of personhood in the light of the relation of Christ to the Spirit in the economy of God.

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Abbreviations

<i>BC</i>	John Zizioulas, <i>Being As Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church</i> (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1985)
<i>I&L</i>	Vladimir Lossky, <i>In the Image and Likeness of God</i> eds. John Erickson and Thomas Bird (New York: St. Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1974)
<i>MT</i>	Vladimir Lossky, <i>The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, Eng. Trans.</i> (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1957)
<i>OT</i>	Vladimir Lossky, <i>Orthodox Theology: An Introduction</i> (New York: St Vladimirs Seminary Press, 1978)
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>

All Patristic references, unless otherwise noted, are taken from *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers Second Series*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1891).

Introduction

The recent revival of interest in the doctrine of Trinity has had a significant impact on many aspects of theology. Central to this debate has been the attempt, of theologians in both the East and the West to recover and clarify the Cappadocian formula of the one ousia three hypostases. In spite of the vast amount of work that has been done there remains a lot that needs to be done. Not only are there questions with regard to the understanding of the Trinity advanced by the Cappadocians, but, there is also the issue of the significance of their theories for other areas of theology. The correlation between the doctrine of the Trinity and theological anthropology has proved particularly complex. There are, at times, huge differences between those who seek to redefine theological anthropology on the basis of trinitarian theology and there remain many who are unconvinced by any correlation between human and divine persons.

In this thesis our concern is to address the development of a relational understanding of personal existence which finds its starting point in the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity. This means that not only must we seek to clarify the Cappadocian understanding of the Trinity, but, we must also deal with the legitimacy and significance of a relational ontology. With the anthropocentric focus of much modern thought the danger of imposing presuppositions onto the doctrine of the Trinity is particularly acute. The Cappadocians did not transfer their understanding of the divine persons to human persons. They struggled to maintain the boundaries of the use of analogy in its application to God. Yet, the demands of the modern age mean that the primary concern of many people is not to define God but to define ourselves. In this thesis we will seek to work with those who are committed to understanding the doctrine of the Trinity as fundamental to theological anthropology. Perceiving John Zizioulas' contribution as one of the more significant contributions to this debate we will work primarily with his approach in order to clarify some of the central issues.

We will begin with a review of the doctrine of the Trinity and the definition of the terms 'person' and 'relation' in the context of that doctrine. Chapter one will deal with the claim that the Cappadocian understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity presents a challenge to substantialist notions of being through a relational ontology. Chapter Two continues from there to explore the Orthodox notion of Father as cause by comparing Zizioulas' approach to

that of T.F. Torrance. Exploring Zizioulas' ardent defence of the Father as cause brings to light the basis of the distinction of the persons and by implication raises the issue of the situatedness of persons through the question of ordering or *taxis*.

In the second section of the thesis we will compare Zizioulas to Vladimir Lossky, in the context of modern existentialist and idealist thought, in order to highlight the significance of Zizioulas' commitment to a relational ontology in all areas of his thesis. Both Zizioulas and Lossky have entered into the modern debate of persons and relations and have been influenced by other thinkers particularly the existentialists and personalists. We will explore the extent and significance of that influence in seeking to describe some of the strengths and weaknesses in both their positions.

In the final section of the thesis we will look at two of the more contentious issues which have arisen in response to Zizioulas' thesis. The first issue which involves the significance of the fall and human corruption is difficult to grapple with due to the radically different emphasises of East and West on theosis and redemption. Our intention is to explore how some of the differences need to be held together.

The final chapter is rather broad as it involves the questions of the relation of Christ to the Spirit, the relation of the Church to Christ and the relation of the human person to the Spirit. Fundamentally, the goal of this chapter is to deal with the relation of God *ad extra*, in the Son and the Spirit, to humanity. Thus, the final chapter will serve to pull together and focus some of the issues which we will have dealt with throughout the whole thesis.

Section A. Establishing a Basis for the Terms 'Person' and 'Relation' in Patristic Theology

Chapter One: Redefining the Parameters of an Ontology of Personhood

Introduction

This century there has been an involved discussion over the doctrine of the Trinity. Scholars from both the eastern and western Church have returned to the patristic debates in an attempt to clarify and affirm an orthodox description of the God who is 'three in one'. The focus of the Church Fathers served to prevent the abstract and speculative discussion over the 'being' of God as a pursuit in its own right by attempting to deal with the question of how God reveals God's self to us in creation and redemption. This century there has been a significant amount of work done to determine exactly what the Fathers said and why they said it. It is surprising to discover that many of the parameters of the debate are just as pertinent to theology today as they were then.

While desiring to be true to the doctrines and traditions of the Church, our focus in this chapter will be to understand them in the context of the modern debate. In referring to the work of the Cappadocians we will simply draw out some key points. As we have already noted, the modern context has refined and polarised the issues and yet the central questions remain the same. Recognising that in this paper we cannot do justice to the full content of the debate we will discuss the recovery of a dynamic relational understanding of God which allows for the mystery of the unity in diversity of the three in one; which in turn is grounded in how we might perceive that God can, in freedom, relate to humanity.

1.1. How do We Speak of God's Being:

The concept of 'being' has been a central concern of philosophy since the time of the early Greek Philosophers. There is no question that the Church Fathers attempted to work with the parameters of philosophy in order to establish or describe what kind of 'being' the God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth was. While the discussion over whether this 'hellenisation' of the gospel was

acceptable or not continues today, the truth is that it was inevitable.¹ The Fathers turned to the philosophical categories in order to express as clearly as possible who God has revealed himself as.² However, the fact that they combined Platonic, Aristotelian and Stoic ideas is in itself evidence that they were using philosophical categories for their own ends rather than simply asserting the categories as they stood. While many scholars would argue that the Fathers simply modified the categories, it seems in fact that their simple changes radically altered the parameters in which the debate was conducted.³

Zizioulas highlights two assumptions of early philosophy which are of particular interest: the first is the assumption that the world, indeed all being, was essentially a closed system; the second was that 'being' was the static unchanging and unified basis of all that exists.⁴ Obviously these two assumptions are oversimplifications of the complex structures of philosophy, nonetheless, they are basically true of the mainstream of philosophical thought. The second assumption, that 'being' was the static unchanging and underlying basis for the world, is evident in Plato's forms and in Aristotle's concept of primary and secondary substance. In fact this assumption is directly related to and arises from the first assumption, for with a belief in the unity and unchanging nature of the world the description of 'god' became directly correlated to the unity of the world.⁵

The first assumption, that the world and all that is in it (including God) was a monadic system, was contradicted by the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, in

1 See the excellent discussion of this issue in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture: The Metamorphosis of Natural Theology in the Christian Encounter with Hellenism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) p.21.

2 In this thesis, affirming Gunton's argument, we will use personal pronouns in speaking of God. It must be said that the current fashion for political correctness in theological language, like so many other well-meaning modern enterprises, has the effect of making the cure worse than the disease. Colin Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* 2nd ed.(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997) p. xix.

3 'We do not extend our language to God, rather, as Jungel makes clear, our language is commandeered by God. In other words, the revelation event includes the semantic extension of our language in and through a dynamic that is irreducibly Trinitarian and which is mediated and realised by God.' Alan Torrance, *Persons in Communion* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996) p.172.

4 *BC* p.16

5 Zizioulas suggests two 'leavenings' which took place in patristic theology: the first is that with *creatio ex nihilo* 'they made being -the existence of the world, existent things - a product of freedom; and secondly 'not only was the being of the world traced back to personal freedom but the being of God Himself was identified with the person'. *BC* p. 39-40

which the Fathers distinguished God from creation.⁶ As many theologians have noted, this distinction was vital as a basis to allow 'freedom' to both creation and to God. Alongside of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* the Church Fathers affirmed a distinction between '*theologia*' and '*economia*' to address the issue of how Jesus Christ has revealed God, while at the same time, God remained greater than what had been revealed in Christ.⁷ Later theological development focused specifically on the question of the relation of the humanity and the divinity in the person of Jesus Christ. However, in the third and fourth centuries the issue was what could be said about God in God's self in order to affirm a) that God is distinct from the world yet able to enter into it in the person of Christ -- this was to refute Arius and b) that God in God's self is identical with although not limited to God for us- this was to refute Sabellius.

These two distinctions, *creatio ex nihilo* and *theologia/economia*, are not one and the same, nor should they be confused with each other. The difficulty is that they do overlap in regard to the person of Christ and therefore have been the source of much confusion. Nazianzen's language illustrates how difficult it is to speak of these distinctions.

[A]nd when I looked a little closer, I saw, not the first and unmingled Nature, known to itself- to the Trinity, I mean; not that which abideth within the first veil, and is hidden by the cherubim; but only that nature , which at last even reaches to us.⁸

Nazianzen is not suggesting that God has two separate natures, although it may appear as though he is, rather, he is affirming that while we can speak of God as he has revealed himself to us, we cannot assume that this means we know God fully as God is in God's self.

Arius misused the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* by asserting that God remains distinct from the created world. The thrust of the doctrine is to insist not that

⁶ It is Athanasius who brought this doctrine to a place of central prominence in establishing the difference between the begotten Son and the created world. 'God always had the power to make, yet the things originated had not the power of being eternal. For they are out of nothing, and therefore were not before their origination; but things which were not before their origination, how could these coexist with the everlasting God? *St. Athanasius; Select works and Letters*, Discourse 1:29.

⁷ Prestige, speaking of the economy, states that it is the 'providential activity of God in nature, human history and the sphere of grace. It need be added that the supreme instance of divine economy... was exhibited in the incarnation, for which the word "oekonomia" without any verbal qualification, is the regular patristic term from the third century onwards.' G.L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought*, (London: SPCK 1952) p.67.

⁸ Nazianzen Or. 28:3

God remains disconnected from the world but that God remains greater than his engagement with the world, which ensures that God's being cannot become 'joined' to the world as it does in a pantheistic model.⁹ The Fathers affirmed that God's being was the source of all being but not in a monistic sense.

We are enquiring into a nature whose being is absolute and not into being bound up with something else. But being is in its proper sense peculiar to God, and belongs to Him entirely, and is not limited or cut short by any before or after.¹⁰

This affirmation is the starting point of their theology. For Nazianzen, to define 'being' one must look to God, for it is God alone who truly *is*. It means God does not need to fit into humanity's categories but humanity must fit into God's.¹¹ It also means that 'being' in the strict sense is found in God and cannot be found apart from Him.

1.2. Divine or Human limits on the Knowledge of God

The distinction between *theologia* and *economia* was used to maintain an apophatic element in the descriptions of God. The emphasis upon the mystery of God's being can be taken in two very different ways. The first approach (which the Fathers took) is to allow that God is not limited to human terms or human understanding because of who he is. The second approach is to believe that the limitation of the knowledge of God has to do with the human capacity for knowledge. The danger with the latter perception is that God can be perceived as an object which is not comprehended because it is not yet fully visible to the human eye.¹² Combined with the misunderstanding of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*,

9 Origen's concept of the soul as eternal left him in a position which identified the human person as eternally related to God. This meant that God was irrevocably tied to the created realm through this eternal relation.

10 Nazianzen 4th Theo Or:18.

11 'The error of arguing from natural phenomena to the incomprehensible might be pardonable if one observed the proper apophatic limitations.' Nyssa Eunomius 1.213 quoted in Pelikan *Christianity and Classical Culture*. p.46.

12 Eunomius suggested that it was sin which prevented the human mind from fully comprehending God (See Pelikan *Christianity and Classical Culture*. p.51). This approach leads to the view that ultimately the fullness of God can be comprehended if and when sin is dealt with. The Cappadocians would at times be seen to posit that the being of God could be known better by the mind than it could be described in language (While this might at first seem to suggest that God could be finally comprehended the qualifying adjective is 'better'). While they held that a deeper understanding of God was possible they maintained ultimately an apophatic element to all knowledge of God. This is particularly well portrayed in Nyssa's *Life of Moses* where he applies the concept of infinite progression in the knowledge of God.

which we have just discussed, the search for God's being becomes the basis for all kinds of abstract and speculative arguments about what kind of being God is. The quest of the theologian, who has not moved beyond a philosophical search for the locus of being, becomes identifying the essence of God as though that is *what* God truly is.¹³ In fact this is the same tendency evidenced in Sabellianism in which the being of God was seen to be that which lay behind the three persons or modes of God. This was certainly not the intention of the Cappadocians when they spoke of the distinction between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. We see their intention in the earlier quote from Nazianzen where he refers to God in God's self as Trinity, rather than, simply speaking of God's essence.¹⁴ That we cannot speak of the being of God in itself is not because of a limitation of human understanding, although that is a significant limit, but because God is not dependent on the world in order to be God.

The history of theological thought reveals that the question of the 'being' of God has often been concerned with identifying the irreducible essence which lies behind the revealed persons. In this century, with the recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity,¹⁵ Karl Rahner is noted for his statement that the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity.¹⁶ His clear insight is that by allowing the distinction between God in God's self and God for us to become too strong, the Church had relegated the doctrine of God to the realm of abstract and intellectual speculation. In particular he condemned the western Church for having lost the understanding that God's being is Trinitarian. His bold declaration that

13 The issue becomes further confused when 'image' language is used to posit a coherence between human intellect or 'nous' and the being of God. Participation in the being of God becomes identified with a conscious union of the mind, which is why psychological models of the Trinity are particularly dangerous. LaCugna notes that where the distinction of the Cappadocians paved the way for the break between *theologia* and *oikonomia*, it was Augustine's psychological model which began the process of abstract speculation about the being of God. Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. (New York: Harper Collins 1991) p.44

14 Nazianzen Or. 28:3

15 Thomas Weinandy provides an extensive list of works published on Trinitarian theology during this century in *The Father's Spirit of Sonship* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995) p.1. British Council of Churches, *The Forgotten Trinity: The Report of the BCC Study Commission on Trinitarian Doctrine Today*, ed. Alistair Heron, 1989, is also helpful in this regard.

16 Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, eng. trans. (London: Burnes and Oates, 1970) p.22. Quoted by G. Havrilak in 'Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity' *SVTQ* vol. 34:1 1990, p. 69.

most theologians in the west were mere 'monotheists'¹⁷ pointed to the fact that discussions on the doctrine of God were normally concerned with identifying the essence of God rather than dealing with the being of God as the three in one and the one in three.¹⁸ Expressed another way we might say that the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity is often translated as a distinction between the essence of God and the existence of God; the essence perceived as the substratum which makes God up, while the existence is identified with the three persons and God's action in the world.

Rahner acknowledged the problem with a distinction between the essence of God and the existence of God yet, he failed to establish that the distinction between God in God's self and God for us was not about an essence/existence distinction.¹⁹ In both the East and the West, a desire to guard the limits to the knowledge of God can seem to suggest that God's essence lies behind God's economy.

In the tradition of the Eastern Church there is no place for a theology, and even less for a mysticism, of the divine essence. The goal of Orthodox Spirituality, the blessedness of the kingdom of heaven, is not the vision of the essence, but, above all a participation in the divine life of the Holy Trinity.²⁰

Although Lossky's intention is to guard us from speculation with regard to the being of God in God's self, his language subtly suggests that the essence lies behind the life of the Trinity. The problem is compounded when we allow the distinction, between the essence and existence of God, to subliminally suggest that God's true being is something different than or apart from what has been revealed to us. The intention of the Greek patristic distinction between *theologia* and *economia* was not to identify the essence which lay behind the persons but to acknowledge that God in God's self is the

17 Rahner, *The Trinity*, p.10. Quoted by G. Havrilak in 'Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity' p. 62. This is not to deny that the Christian faith is monotheistic but to emphasise that the one God we worship is Trinity. It is interesting to note that the use of the term 'monotheistic' is misleading in so far as we do worship one God, yet, we do not have a term to denote being that is not autonomous and self contained in itself.

18 Rahner himself failed to avoid this identification. See A.Torrance *Persons in Communion*. p.273

19 LaCugna, *God For Us*, Quoted by Torrance in *Persons in Communion*, p.275, says 'Rahner was not entirely able to resist making use of the Cartesian conception of a person as a discrete self-consciousness but in such a way that it is the 'divine "essence", not the three-divine persons which is made the referent of that self consciousness.'

20 *MIT* p.65.

ultimate category of being rather than a category derived from or dependent upon human conceptions of being.²¹

The distinction between *theologia* and *economia* is primarily an epistemological question. It maintains the limits of what we might say of or about God. Yet, this distinction is in turn based upon the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* which maintains an ontological distinction between God and the world. As a result of the overlap of these distinctions we must also acknowledge that the *theologia/economia* distinction also reflects that God's being is not encompassed in his engagement with the world. The confusion arises when the two distinctions are conflated to suggest that God's being is located in his transcendence of the world. This is what happens in the western search to identify the essence of God and equally in a eastern emphasis upon the unknowable essence of God. In other words these two distinctions are conflated whenever the suggestion is made that God's essence somehow lies beyond his intimate involvement with creation. Zizioulas, concerned to maintain God's intimate involvement in the world, fails to maintain the delicate balance in his thought when he affirms that the essence/energy model 'allows for God's immanent being to be <<incomprehensible>> and truly *beyond* history and creation'.²² In his later work he more carefully notes that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* shows 'that God existed *before* and *regardless* of the world, and thus that it is imperative to be able to refer to God without implicitly or explicitly referring at the same time to the world'.²³ The distinction between God and the world is not that God 'exists' somehow beyond the world but that in existing before the world he is not monistically joined to the world. In turn, the *theologia/economia* distinction establishes the limits to human knowledge of God, it does not assert that God's true 'being' remains other than his involvement with the world.

21 John Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today: Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study', *The Forgotten Trinity*, ed. Alisdair Heron (BCC study commission on the doctrine of God the Trinity today, 1991) p.23, notes Rahner's failure to appreciate the need to maintain a distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity.

22 John Zizioulas, 'The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council on the Holy Spirit' in *Credo in Spiritum Sanctum* ed. J.S. Martin (Rome: Liberia Editrice Vaticana, 1983), p.51. We will briefly discuss the essence/energy distinction in chapter four of this thesis.

23 Zizioulas, *Doctrine of God* 1991 p.23.

1.3. God's Intimate Involvement

LaCugna, who begins with acknowledging Rahner's axiom of the unity of the economic and immanent Trinity,²⁴ continues by suggesting that the distinction between God in God's self and God for us was the cause not only of the abstract speculation on the essence of God but also of the understanding of a God who was not intimately involved with the world.

Indeed the ultimate theological error, the ultimate non orthodoxy or heresy or untruth about God, would be to think of God as living in an altogether separate household, living entirely for Godself, by Godself, within Godself. This is what the Church tried to overcome in Arianism and Eunomianism, but to some degree this 'heresy' is incipient even in Trinitarian theologies that make divine self sufficiency absolute.²⁵

LaCugna is concerned that the confusion over the distinction of God from the world has led to the notion of a transcendent God who is disengaged from the world. She would prefer to emphasise that while God remains beyond objective definition this does not mean that God is distinct from the world. She maintains that God is personal and therefore uncircumscribable rather than allowing that God in God's self is in anyway different from God for us.

It is one thing to say that God is incomprehensible because we do not know the essence of God as it is in itself. It is another thing to say that God is incomprehensible because God is *personal*. The former locates God's incomprehensibility in the limitation of the human mind, the latter in God.²⁶

The emphasis upon the 'personal' nature of God allows that knowledge of God retains a degree of apophaticism because of who God is.²⁷ However, in order to establish her position LaCugna must first assert that the term person or personal is a concept which cannot be objectified.²⁸ While we would agree with an emphasis upon the term 'person' we would equally affirm that it is not adequate, in its own right, to maintain the limits on the knowledge of

24 In reference to the patristics LaCugna, *God For Us*, p.211, notes that the distinction was made between theologia (that pertaining to the nature of God in Himself and economia (that pertaining to the work of salvation). Quoting from Rahner's *The Trinity* she says 'no adequate distinction can be made between the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the economy.'

25 LaCugna, *God For Us*, p. 383.

26 LaCugna, *God For Us*, p.302. Italics mine.

27 LaCugna has perceptively realised that a distinction between God for us and God in God's self makes no sense if we do not address the question of the 'being' of God.

28 In chapter two, when we discuss the use of the term 'person' as it is applied to God *ad intra*, we will posit that it is the persons of the Trinity who define the term person.

God.²⁹ As we will discuss in chapter three, the term person is a necessary and useful analogy in a description of God and yet it has its limits.³⁰

What LaCugna has not recognised is that the distinction between God for us and God in God's self, or as we prefer, God *ad extra* and God *ad intra*,³¹ is a fundamental distinction to enable the use of any analogy in the first place.³² The Fathers were able to explore and use different analogies to describe God because they began with the presupposition that all analogies were bounded by this distinction between *theologia* and *economia*. Therefore to use the term 'person' to guard the limits on the knowledge of God is to fail to maintain proper analogous limits. Emphasising that God is uncircumscribable because God is personal, without careful qualification, fails to allow that God remains greater than all analogies.

While there is no question that the distinction between God for us and God in God's self, allowed or even enabled the development of an abstract or even speculative approach to God, we would continue to maintain that it is a necessary distinction if we are to allow God's relation to the world to be a free rather than a necessary and pantheistic relation.³³ Therefore, we would affirm the one half of Rahner's axiom, that the economic Trinity is true to the immanent Trinity, for this serves to emphasise the continuity between the

29 LaCugna's use of 'person' is, to a large degree, taken from Zizioulas' thesis. As we will discuss later Zizioulas himself is at times in danger of assuming that the term person does not itself need to be limited by the distinction between *theologia* and *economia*.

30 In this context we must remember that many of the Fathers approved of identifying God's essence with 'nous' for much the same reason as LaCugna now wants to use 'person', because it is a term which defies circumscription.

31 '[O]ne aspect of the confusion here relates to the term 'immanent', which is a theologically weak term implying a static conception of God "as he remains in himself". The phrase *Deus ad intra* is a much healthier one, in that it implies that God conceived independently of his relation towards that which is not God, still remains a relational being.' A. Torrance *Persons in Communion* p.279.

32 When Zizioulas suggests that there were two leavenings he holds the 'personalness' of God hand in hand with the distinction between God and the world. *BC*, p.39-40.

33 Later Trinitarian theology enables us to see more clearly the importance of the doctrine of the immanent Trinity. Because God is, 'before' creation took place, already a being-in-relation, there is no *need* for him to create what is already other than himself....In some recent theology it has been suggested that, if God does not need the creation in some way or another, he must be a distant and unfeeling monarch. Such an objection confuses two points; the first is the proper objection to the form that doctrines of aseity have sometimes taken, suggesting as they do the total lack of involvement, of an Epicurean kind, of a completely immutable and unfeeling deity. Yet, it does not follow that for God to enter into relation with the world he must need it in some way. Colin Gunton, 'Relation and Relativity' in *Trinitarian Theology Today: Essays on Divine Being and Act* ed. Christoph Schwobel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 97.

God revealed and the God who reveals. However, we cannot equally affirm that the immanent Trinity is wholly contained in the economic Trinity,³⁴ for this would tie God irrevocably to the world. The distinction of *theologia/economia* is meant to ensure that God's being remains greater than that which has been revealed -- not distinct from, nor removed from that which has been revealed. Furthermore we would question LaCugna on whether the real issue here is the distinction which the Fathers made or a failure to accept the parameters in which it was made.

Let us review where we are. The distinction between God *ad extra* and God *ad intra* has developed in many instances into a basis to allow abstract speculation on the one essence of God. Nonetheless, we would argue that it remains an essential distinction if we are to begin our discussions of the Trinity in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. As we noted at the beginning of this section, the Fathers developed this distinction in order to maintain first that God is truly God as he has shown himself to us in Jesus and secondly that God remains greater than but not distinct from this revelation. In particular, we would maintain that the patristic distinction between *theologia* and *economia* was made to allow for and defend the deity of Christ and the mystery of the unity in diversity of the Trinity, in so far as they were concepts which were not subject to human logic. In this discussion we must remember that the Fathers began from the context of revelation, they did not begin by attempting to describe the one transcendent God. Their concern was primarily to explain how we might speak of the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ, rather than offering a philosophy of being.³⁵

In making the clear distinction between the world and God and yet affirming that God is the source of all being the Fathers were not only challenging the notion that being is the substratum of all existence but were also challenging how 'being' could be defined or understood. The philosophical notion that being is the static substance which lies behind a particular existent could not fit with a distinction between God and the World. Rather, there needed to be

34 Yves Congar reflects the same concern with Rahner's thesis in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The River of Life Flows in East and West*. Vol. 3 eng.trans. D.Smith (New York: Seabury, 1983), pp. 11-18.

35 'The basis of Eastern triadology is found in soteriology, in that its fundamental goal is to maintain the christological and pneumatological presuppositions that 'a) the incarnate Logos and Divine Spirit are met and experienced first as divine agents of salvation; and (b) only then are they discovered to be essentially one God.' Havrilak, 'Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity', p.69.

a new model of being which allowed for the fact that God in God's self was independent of, yet capable of truly engaging with or entering into relation with creation. In other words the challenge the Fathers were presented with was how they might speak of God's relation to the world without threatening the freedom of God or the freedom of the world. Unfortunately in much of the tradition the distinction between *theologia* and *economia* has not been correlated with a revision of the notion of being with the result that God has been understood as ultimately removed from or disengaged from the world. This in turn allowed a speculative focus on the essence of God where the being of God was perceived in static and unchanging terms.³⁶ Therefore the problem in utilising a distinction between *economia* and *theologia* is not that it has produced an abstract doctrine of a God totally removed from the world but that the philosophical principles which were called into question by this distinction were still used to interpret the being of God. It was exactly this issue which forced the Fathers to define, from the revelation of God *ad extra*, how they understood that the being of God *ad intra* was the dynamic and relational unity of the three in one.

2.1. Cappadocian Distinctions on the Being of God

In 325 ad. the Council of Nicea adopted the term *homoousion* (ὁμοούσιον) to affirm the unity of the Father and the Son. This affirmation was in response to Arian arguments which insisted that the distinction between Jesus and God must be a distinction of nature or essence if it were to be a real distinction. By declaring an identity of substance between the Son and the Father the Council established that the 'persons' were equally God, in themselves and with each other. This statement of the unity of the Father and the Son is without question an important aspect of the doctrine of the Trinity and the proclamation of the Christian faith. It identifies Jesus Christ with the 'being' of God, and establishes that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* does not imply that Jesus is anything less than fully God with the Father. This definition narrowed the focus in the discussion over the nature of Jesus Christ although it did not end the debate. There were many who continued to question what it meant to say that the Son was of one substance with the

³⁶ 'The significance of this interpretation lies in the assumption that the ontological 'principle' of God is not found in the person but in the substance, that is, in the "being" itself of God. Indeed the idea took shape in Western theology that which constitutes the unity of God is the one divine substance, the one divinity; this is, as it were, the ontological 'principle' of God'. BC p.40.

Father and there was the parallel question of the Spirit's relation with the Father and the Son.

The Cappadocians were, and continue to be criticised for their unease with simply asserting the *homoousion* in their concern to maintain the distinction of the persons. Weinandy suggests that the Cappadocians failed to understand that the term *homoousion* did allow for a description of unity with diversity.³⁷ He notes that to state that there is an identity of substance presupposes a distinction of persons. It is clear, however, that the Cappadocians recognised this implication, yet, felt it was not adequate, given the need to refute those who were interpreting the Nicene affirmation improperly. 'Marcellus...had the hardihood to profess to find a pretext for his principles in that creed by affixing an improper sense upon the *homoousion*.'³⁸ Given the parameters and assumptions of Greek philosophy up to that point, it is easy to see how perceiving the two persons as identified in substance could suggest that the *ousia* was simply the platonic form which lay behind the manifestation of persons.

The chief opponents to the Nicene agreement were the semi-Arians or 'homoiousions', who strongly argued that the word *homoousion* suggested a form of Sabellianism because it failed to ensure that the distinction between the Father and Son was maintained.³⁹ The proposal to replace *homoousion* (ὁμοούσιον; of one substance) with *homoiousion* (ὁμοιούσιον; like in substance) was one attempt to allow for the particularity of persons.⁴⁰ The Cappadocians, although sympathetic to the concerns of the Semi-Arians, ⁴¹

37 'The Cappadocians never captured the true metaphysical significance of Nicea's *homoousion* doctrine....because they did not possess the metaphysical acumen of Athanasius, Platonic emanationism became firmly grafted into Orthodox Trinitarian thought, and it is present to this day.' Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, p.13. Not only does the testimony of the Cappadocians refute Weinandy's suggestion but we must also note that Athanasius was willing to accept the Cappadocians' distinctions.

38 Basil Ep.125:1

39 Paul of Samosata, a leader of the semi-Arians, had accepted *ομοουσιον* yet used it in a sense which allowed for a Sabellian interpretation of the unity.

40 The Synod of Selucia in 359 adopted the term *homoiousion* in place of *homoousion*.

41 William Hill writes 'The deepest instincts of the Cappadocians are with the *homoiousion* formula, with its corresponding emphasis upon plurality in the Godhead.' *The Three Personed God: The Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation*, (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1982), p.47. Quoted in Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, p. 55. While there is no doubt that the Cappadocians were in favour of maintaining the distinction of persons it is also clear that they were very concerned not to lose the simple unity of the Godhead. To suggest that their 'instincts' or loyalty lay with the term *homoiousion* rather than with the term *homoousion* is

did eventually align themselves with the council of Nicea.⁴² Basil, commenting on the *homoiousion*, notes the danger of 'likeness' being interpreted loosely unless it is qualified with the statement 'without any difference' (ἁπαράλλάκτως); and for that reason he prefers homoousion.⁴³ Basil affirmed the substantial unity in deity of each person (as defined by the Nicene council). 'For God in essence or substance is co-essential or consubstantial with God in essence or substance.'⁴⁴ While the Cappadocians, with Athanasius, did accept the terminological necessity of homoousion, they were concerned to define the context within which it was used.

The fact that 'homoousion' did not finally settle the issue is also evident in the fact that the debate over the 'being' of God moved on to include the question of the nature of the Spirit. The question of the nature of the Spirit had remained dormant while the Church had struggled with affirming the deity of Christ. The fourth century Church was divided over the nature of the Spirit due to the uncertain meaning of scriptural texts. The *pneumatomachi* (a 'heretical' position which developed following the council of Nicea) forced the issue of the nature of the Spirit by denying the deity of the Spirit.⁴⁵ The popular support of this reductionist conception of the Spirit is reflected in Basil's cautious use of language when speaking of the deity of the Spirit.⁴⁶ In contrast to Basil, both Gregories affirm the declaration of the deity of the Spirit. Nazianzen in particular questions Basil's cautious approach noting the need for clarity on the nature of the Spirit.⁴⁷ Yet, in light of Basil's careful affirmation of the equality of the Spirit with the Father, in *De Spiritu Sancto*, one can only assume that his concern was to affirm the equality of the Spirit without alienating anyone who was close to his position. Basil was

misleading. Certainly they struggled with the issues but they clearly stated that homoiousion is not adequate to convey the unity of persons.

42 Basil affirms the correct understanding of homoousion. Ep. 52:1-3, 159:1, 226:3, 125:1-3, 214:3-4, 361. Cited by Jevtich in 'Between the 'Nicaeans' and the 'Easterners'" SVTQ 1980, Vol. 24, p.239.

43 Basil, Ep. 9:3.

44 Basil, Ep. 8:3.

45 The pneumatomachi literally means 'fighter against the Spirit'. *Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. A. Richardson, (London: SCM 1969), s.v. 'pneumatomachi', A. Richardson. An offshoot of Arianism, the pneumatomachi denied deity to the Spirit.

46 Basil, *De Sp. St* 25, points to the equality of the Spirit with the Son and the Father rather than bluntly speaking of him as God. *De Sp. St* 'The Lord has delivered to us as a necessary and saving doctrine that the Holy Spirit is to be ranked with the Father.' Although elsewhere he does directly call the Spirit God. Basil, Ep. 8, Ep. 159.

47 Nazianzen Ep. 58.

apparently aware of the danger of ostracising other Church leaders in his era, many of whom were uncertain of how to speak of the Spirit.⁴⁸ Yet, this was not solely a pastoral concern, clearly part of his difficulty was with using a unity which was founded on an identity of substance. Zizioulas suggests that where homoousion was necessary to affirm the unity of the Son with the Father it was not equally necessary in the case of the Spirit. His argument is that the Son in his union with the created realm needed to be affirmed as uncreated in substance, where the Spirit who remained distinct from creation did not need the same affirmation.⁴⁹ Thus Zizioulas' argument is that homoousios is not an affirmation of the unity of God but a simple assertion that Christ is uncreated in substance.

2.2. Three Distinct Hypostases or Persons

The result of the vigorous debate following the Nicene Council was a gradual clarification of the term hypostasis (ὑπόστασις). The Cappadocians, who were directly involved in this process, were anxious to guard the particularity and distinction of the three persons without losing the simple unity. Nyssa says

Why then dost thou divide the three persons into different fragments of different natures, and make them three Gods, unlike to one another, whilst from all thou dost receive one and the same grace?⁵⁰

In order to guard the unity yet particularity of the three persons, they distinguished between the terms hypostasis and ousia, noting that God was one in essence or ousia while being three hypostases or persons. The western Church generally referred to the three as persons following Tertullian's description of *persona*. The Cappadocians used both *hypostasis* and *prosopon* suggesting that the nature of the three was somewhat more than the common understanding contained in the word person. 'For merely to enumerate the differences of persons is insufficient; we must confess each person to have a natural existence in real hypostasis.'⁵¹ At this time the word *persona*, in the Roman world, conveyed the idea of one's position in the structure of society; in the Greek world, it suggested the sense of a mask or

48 Zizioulas, 'The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council', 1983 p.33.

49 'If one professes that the Spirit is not a creature then one does not have to profess the <<homoousios>> of the Spirit'. Zizioulas, 'The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council', 1983 p. 34

50 Nyssa, *On the Baptism of Christ*

51 Basil, Ep 110:5.

a role assumed in a play.⁵² Neither of these definitions was satisfactory to the Cappadocians as they suggested a notion of person which was only temporary or a mask over the true substance which lay behind the visible manifestation. The problem was that there was no conceptualisation or philosophical system which could allow for true existence or *being* in the form of the concrete particulars. The concrete particular would inevitably lose its connection with real and eternal significance. Person, or personality, in the common parlance would be something exterior to the individual; for example, one could assume several roles or '*personas*'. In this case to say the Father, Son and Spirit were persons could suggest Sabellianism where the Son and Spirit were only temporal manifestations of the true essence. What the Cappadocians desired was a definition which lay somewhere between the two words, person and hypostasis. They desired a definition to combine the idea of substance (or real content) which hypostasis suggested, with the idea of identity which person denoted.

At the same time the popular understanding of hypostasis itself was not adequate to explain the particularity of the three, because it was understood as equivalent to the word *ousia*, both of which suggested substance. In fact the Council of Nicea, in defence of the unity of the Father and the Son, had used hypostasis and *ousia* interchangeably. It is easy to understand why the council would be willing to equate hypostasis and *ousia*; their objective was to affirm the full deity of Christ in the face of the Arian challenge which opposed the claim that Christ was equal to the Father. The benefit of equating hypostasis with *ousia* is that it affirms the equality of the three. Furthermore it lays the ground work for speaking of the ontological reality of both *ousia* and hypostasis. At the same time while the Nicene understanding of hypostasis conveyed the important idea that the three persons were fully God, equating hypostasis and *ousia* with each other allowed the three to lose their particular significance.

⁵² Prestige suggests that *prosopon* never carried the notion of mask in theology; 'It never means a mask in theology, though modern writers constantly repeat that the Sabellians used it in that sense. In reality, the Sabellians appear to have held only one *prosopon* in the godhead, and the word uniformly means individual.' G.L. Prestige, *God* p.xxviii. Nonetheless, this does not refute the tendency of the Sabellians to suggest that the three persons were temporal modes of the one God, and in this sense they may legitimately be viewed as elucidating the concept that the three persons were simply roles assumed by God; in which case the idea of a mask does provide a simple expression of their position.

Given the strong statement in the Nicene council of the identity of substance between the Father and the Son, the Cappadocians were able to move on to elaborate how the distinct three were united without difference and without division. Thus they were careful to emphasise the unity in distinction by using the word *homousios* hand in hand with the word *hypostasis*. 'We are therefore bound to confess the Son to be one substance with the Father, as it is written; but the Father to exist in His own proper hypostasis, the Son in His and the Holy Ghost in His, as they themselves have clearly delivered this doctrine'. Jevitch says of Basil that he 'always combined the two terms "hypostasis" and "homousios", in order to express more correctly the ineffable mystery of the Trinitarian being, life and communion, *koinonia* of God'.⁵³

2.3. The Substance of God

The Cappadocians were not happy with some of the substantive implications of a statement of ousia which subsumed the hypostases. For Basil, the necessary qualification was that three hypostases should suggest three true and 'substantial' entities and not simply roles within, or masks over, one absolute substance. For in 'the case of God the Father and God the Son there is no question of substance anterior to or even underlying both'.⁵⁴ Following the council of Nicea, Athanasius recognised the need to affirm that the hypostasis could be used to speak of the threeness of God.⁵⁵ Yet, he allowed that the term could apply to either the threeness or the oneness of God. The Cappadocians sought to clearly distinguish between hypostasis and ousia to point out that hypostasis did not mean substance in the way that ousia meant substance.⁵⁶ 'Those who say that 'ousia' and 'hypostasis' are the same are compelled to confess only different 'persons' (πρόσωπα), and by avoiding the use of the word 'three hypostases' they do not succeed in escaping the Sabellian evil.'⁵⁷ They spoke of three hypostases and one ousia, a formula

53 Jevitch, 'Between the "Nicaeans" and the "Easterners"', p.245.

54 Basil, Ep. 52:1.

55 In the council of Alexandria in 362 Athanasius had moved beyond the Nicene refusal to accept three hypostases and was happy to use hypostasis in both senses of either one hypostasis or three hypostases. For the Cappadocians it could not be a case of either/or, three hypostasis became for them a key term to guard the absolute distinction of the three.

56 See discussion in Basil, Ep. 125:1.

57 Basil, Ep. 236:6, quoted by Jevitch *Between the 'Nicaeans' and the 'Easterners'* SVTQ 1980 vol. 24 p.243.

which had been avoided by the council of Nicea⁵⁸ while trying to defend against the Arian use of hypostasis.⁵⁹ The result was that two terms which had been considered equivalents are held to refer to different aspects of God. In the similarity and yet distinction of these terms the Cappadocians established the paradox in understanding the being of God. For Basil, hypostasis meant a mode of existence (τρόπος ὑπάρξεως)⁶⁰ which was real and distinct in itself, without allowing for an autonomy of essence. Ousia meant the substance which was the inseparable unity of the three hypostases.

The difficulty inherent in the Cappadocian project of locating ontological significance to the hypostasis is that it seems to deny ontological significance to the ousia of God.⁶¹ Thus many people have accused them of positing an abstract ousia in favour of substantial hypostases.⁶² We would not agree that in this formula, of one ousia and three hypostases, either term should be understood or held as less significant.⁶³ Rather, the Cappadocians clearly wanted to hold both terms as equally significant in understanding God. Without question there are times when it seems as though they use ousia in the sense of an abstract universal, yet, they also speak of the ousia in very concrete terms as well.⁶⁴ Their insistence on the formula of one ousia and three hypostases is clear affirmation that they did not want to deny the

58 Where some people would argue that the phrase ἐξ ἑτέρας υποστάσεως ἢ οὐσίας φάσκοντας εἶναι might be seen as a direct statement against the use of the three hypostasis, Stead cogently argues that it was in fact simply a defence that the Son has no origin apart from the Father. J.C. Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Claredon Press, 1977), p.241.

59 The term 'three hypostases' was first used by Origen, See Jevtich 'Between the Nicaeans and the Easterners', p 248.

60 Basil *De Sp. St.* 46; Ep. 38:3 and Nyssa *Con Eun* 1.

61 Nyssa commonly uses 'community of nature' to refer to the unity of the three -however, he typically uses the analogy of human unity to explain this 'community'. (114,132,146).

62 LaCugna quotes Hanson (*The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God* p.735) who suggests that the Cappadocians used ousia in an abstract way. However, LaCugna, *God For Us*, p.80, defends the Cappadocians noting that they were simply attempting to maintain the unknowability of the ousia.

63 John Panagopolus suggests that, 'In order to avoid the further accusation of tritheism, the identification of prosopon with hypostasis actually served, contrary to Zizioulas' understanding, to empty hypostasis of ontological content'. 'Ontology or Theology of the person?' *Synaxis*, 1985. Cited by Aristotle Papanikolaou, unpublished paper presented at American Academy of Religion, (San Francisco), Nov. 1997.

64 Kelly affirms "The fundamental point which should be remembered is that for these writers the ousia of Godhead was not an abstract essence but a concrete reality'. J.N.D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: A&C Black, 1958), p.268.

'oneness' of God.⁶⁵ Part of the difficulty surely comes from the philosophical categories which they had to work with. Both Plato and Aristotle end up with particulars which are secondary to true 'being'. Philosophically it was impossible for 'being', as the substratum of a closed monadic world, to allow for ontological significance to the particulars. In Aristotle's scheme, which was an attempt to reverse the abstract idealism of Plato's forms, the primary substance or being existed in hypostatic form. While many theologians saw this as the perfect way to describe the being of the Trinity it failed to satisfy the Cappadocians.⁶⁶ The problem with Aristotle's scheme is that even though the secondary substance does not exist apart from hypostases it can exist apart from a particular hypostasis. In other words, if we apply Aristotle's scheme to the Trinity we could say that without the Spirit, the Son and the Father would still be fully God because the essence or secondary substance of God would still dwell in them.

The clear declaration of the Cappadocians was that God was three in one and one in three. God is not three *and* one, but three *in* one and one in three. The threeness and oneness are not in conflict, nor can God ever be described solely as either one or three. In describing the Christian God the Cappadocians spoke of the one simple ousia (οὐσία) and the three distinct persons or hypostases (ὑπόστασις).

But the communion and the distinction apprehended in them are, in a certain sense, ineffable and inconceivable, the continuity of nature being never rent asunder by the distinction of the hypostases, nor the notes of proper distinction confounded in the community of essence.⁶⁷

While they spoke at various times of either the essential "oneness" of God or the distinct persons of the Godhead the central claim was that it was not a case

65 'We on the contrary confess identity of nature and accepting the consubstantiality, and rejecting the composition of the Father, God in substance, Who begat the Son, God in substance.' Basil, Ep. 8:3. Almost inevitably philosophical principles demand that either the hypostases or the ousia must be the ontological basis for the being of God. So that the Cappadocians refused to allow that the ousia alone is the ontological basis of the Godhead seems at first glance to deny its ontological significance.

66 Many scholars in the West argue that the Cappadocians are simply using Aristotle's model of primary and secondary substance in their distinction of hypostasis and ousia. Zizioulas argues that this is a misunderstanding of the Cappadocians. BC p. 38& 85. LaCugna quotes J. Lebon (from 'Le Sort du Consubstantial Nicéen' RHE 48 (1953), pp. 635-655), arguing the same position as Zizioulas although she allows that it is a highly contentious issue. LaCugna, *God For Us*, p.67. J. Wilkes, 'The Trinitarian Ontology of John Zizioulas' in *Vox Evangelica* 25, 1995, p.67, also argues that it is not possible to align the Cappadocians doctrine with Aristotle's scheme.

67 Basil Ep 38:4.

of "either/or", instead, they insisted that one must acknowledge the two principles at the same time. Speaking of the unity we need to constantly realise we may forget the distinctions and speaking of the three we must constantly realise we may forget their absolute unity.

The Fathers insisted that each of the three are fully God in themselves and together but they are only fully God in themselves because they are related in an indissoluble way.⁶⁸ While their assertion guards against dividing God into portions or suggesting a functional interdependent combination of three persons it also prevents viewing the essence⁶⁹ as being something apart from the three as though it lay behind the three. As contradictory as it may appear, in an immediate logical sense, for three hypostases to be one God without confusion and without addition, the Cappadocians insisted on this description of God. To prevent one plus one plus one adding up to three they refused to allow for any submission of the Trinity to combination or addition. They clearly state that although God is three persons there is no way in which God can be numbered.⁷⁰ In fact to use the concept of number in referring to God denies the 'nature' of God. Basil insists upon the unity of God:

we confess one God not in number but in nature. For everything which is called one in number is not one absolutely, nor yet simple in nature; but God is universally confessed to be simple and not composite.⁷¹

To speak of God who is three in one and one in three does not lead to a mathematical equation of how the three might add up to one or how the one might divide equally into three. It is not a question of addition but the holding together of two apparently paradoxical statements.

68 T.F. Torrance speaks of Athanasius' interpretation of homoousios which 'meant not merely that the ousia of the Son was of the ousia of God, but that there was an indivisible and continuous relation of being of the Father in the Son, so that the being of the Godhead is whole or complete not in the Father alone but in the Son and the Holy Spirit as much as in the Godhead' T.F.Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation* p.226. Quoted in Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, 13.

69 Essence in this sense does not refer to the abstract elements which make up the ousia. Instead it refers to objective unity of the three persons. Prestige notes the danger of using essence in the sense of an abstract universal. Prestige, *God*, p. 270. In spite of this danger it is a word which the Cappadocians use to speak of the ousia while striving to avoid implying that the ousia is abstract.

70 They begin with the Aristotelian premise that that which is not material cannot be numbered, this in part would be to avoid the materialism of a stoic approach which would divide up the ousia of God, yet they move beyond it as well by insisting that while the persons are distinct the nature of God is both substantial and simple.

71 Basil Ep. 8;2. See also Nazianzen Or. 31;17-19.

The Cappadocians played an important role in funnelling the concerns of the Arians and semi-Arians towards a clarification which did not diminish the work of the Nicene council. The strong statement of the unity of the Father and the Son which had been spearheaded by Athanasius gave them the freedom to work with the concern of maintaining the particularity of the persons. Both the Arians and the semi-Arians (including the Cappadocians) followed in the footsteps of Origen with his concern to maintain the distinctions of the persons. In the formula of one ousia in three hypostases, the Fathers found a way which allowed for a clearer expression of the nature of God without providing a basis for positing different gods. While many people have accused the Cappadocians of tritheism both in their time and even today,⁷² we would insist that it is a danger implicit in the complexity of comprehending the doctrine of the Trinity rather than being a fault or characteristic of their particular position. It must be said that the danger inherent in losing the understanding of the particular persons is equal to the danger of tritheism. The Cappadocians did not want to suggest polytheism in any way (they clearly affirmed biblical monotheism).⁷³ It is only by struggling with both the unity and diversity of God that anyone can hope to appreciate more deeply the true nature of God.

We have expressed something of the paradox which the Cappadocian formula of the one ousia and three hypostases attempted to affirm. Clearly one of their concerns was to maintain an apophatic element to any descriptions of God. Nonetheless in their defence of this formula, they continued to clarify how the formula should be understood. With their willingness to utilise the analogy of human persons and human communities to express something of the paradox of the Trinity they are often identified as the patristic source of the 'social' doctrine of the Trinity. Throughout this thesis we will be considering Zizioulas' argument for the use of the language of persons and relations, language which he correlates to the Cappadocians' formula of one ousia and three hypostases. In order to understand his application of the Cappadocian ideas to his theology we must clarify several points along the way. These points include the Cappadocians' use of analogies, and their understanding of the distinction of the persons.

72Alister McGrath labels the Cappadocians as tritheistic in *Christian Theology: an Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell Pub, 1994) p.257.

73 Nazianzen, Or 21:35, speaks of the danger of polytheism in his tribute to Athanasius.

Having explored these points we will then return to examine how Zizioulas highlights the notion of the communion or *koinonia* of the three persons.

3.1. Analogies

The Cappadocians used a whole variety of analogies to express the being of God as three in one. Yet, as we noted at the beginning of this paper all these analogies were used within the assumption that God's being could never be wholly defined by an analogy because God remains greater than and free in relation to the created world. Nazianzen notes the problem with analogies:

I have been unable to discover anything on earth with which to compare the nature of the Godhead. For even if I did happen upon some tiny likeness it escaped me for the most part, and left me down below with my example. I picture to myself an eye, a fountain, a river, as others have done before, to see if the first might be analogous to the Father, the second to the Son, and the third to the Holy Ghost...Again I thought of the sun and a ray and light. But here again there was a fear lest people should get the idea of composition in the Uncompounded Nature.⁷⁴

In spite of this concern there are clearly times when the use of analogies by the Cappadocians, particularly Nyssa, is inappropriate. To express something of the interrelations of the three, Gregory Nyssen, at one point, uses the analogy of the composition of elements which make up an individual person.⁷⁵ He suggests that the three persons are in fact united to each other in the same way as an individual human operates as a union of body, soul and spirit.⁷⁶ Ultimately the problem with this analogy is that it tends to suggest a functional unity. While the body is one aspect of the human person one cannot say in this sense that Jesus is only part of God. When this analogy is confused with the distinction between God's being *ad extra* and God's being *ad intra* which we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the stage is set for the problematic essence/existence distinction.

One of the major reasons why the Cappadocians are often accused of being tritheistic is because they sought to emphasise the distinction of the 'three' in one by using the analogy of human persons united as a species. Gregory of

⁷⁴Nazianzen, *Fifth Theo. Or.* 31-32. Nyssa also guarded against perceiving analogies as comprehensive or even adequate to describe the being of God. Quoted in Pelikan, *Christianity*. p. 45.

⁷⁵ Nyssa, *The Great Catechism* chapter 1-2

⁷⁶ Stead, *Divine Substance*. p.170, identifies one point at which Nyssa uses a metaphor of the coexistence of several sciences in the same mind in *Contra Ar. et Sab* 12. However he notes that Nyssa is conscious that it is only a metaphor.

Nyssa demonstrates a clear preference for using the analogy of the general to the particular.⁷⁷ Basil, however, is careful to differentiate himself from Stoic notions of unity by substratum and Aristotelian notions of unity by genus.⁷⁸ There is some truth to the idea that there is a sense of tritheism in their descriptions; however, they took pains to avoid suggesting that there were three gods, devoting great effort to establish the unmitigated unity of God. The fact that they upheld God's *being* as the only true *being* ensured that any analogies based on human persons could not be interpreted as anthropomorphic projections on the being of God.

3.2. Operations

One of the central questions raised by the Cappadocians' doctrine of the Trinity is their refusal to distinguish the three persons on the basis of their operations or on the basis of any qualities or characteristics. The Cappadocians speak of the operations of the three persons as one operation.

Grant then, that we perceive the operation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost to be one and the same, in no respect showing difference or variation; from this identity of operation we necessarily infer the unity of nature.⁷⁹

Gregory of Nyssa, in particular, argues for a unity of ousia which is clearly evident from their unity of operations.⁸⁰ They do not speak of the three being distinguished by responsibilities for different areas nor do they speak of them working together in the sense of the strengths of one person complementing the weaknesses of the other.⁸¹ To identify areas of responsibility as the absolute domain of one of the three, would suggest a division of persons which was absolute. This was part of the suggestion of the Arians who in attempting to define the three persons assigned them areas of operation which became absolute definitions and distinctions of their natures. The area of operation, for the Arians, became the description of the person. Thus the Cappadocians were careful to qualify that the operations

77 Although this point depends upon whether Ep. 38, which uses the analogy of unity by species, is attributed to Gregory of Nyssa or Basil.

78 Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers: Faith, Trinity, Incarnation*, p.342-346, Cited in Wilkes *The Trinitarian*, p.86.

79 Basil, Ep. 189:6.

80 Athanasius had also argued from a unity of operations to a unity of nature.

81 This does not mean that they did not speak of the three acting in particular ways, simply that they could not be differentiated on the basis of their actions.

involved all three persons equally or at the least could not be used to establish distinctions between the persons.

The concern to maintain the unity of the persons in their operations was strengthened with a refusal to acknowledge distinction on the basis of qualities.

We in accordance with the true doctrine speak of the Son as neither like nor unlike the Father. Each of these terms is equally impossible , for like and unlike are predicated in relation to quality, and the divine is free from quality.⁸²

Thus they refer to the three as being one in essence, simple and uncompounded. Where the *ομοιουσios* party had sought to clarify the unity by stating that the Father and Son were alike in nature rather than identical in nature (*homousios*) the Cappadocians maintained Athanasius' idea of the inherent unity of persons in their *ousia*.

The full force of this statement may be felt when we realise that in human terms our primary means of differentiating one person from another is by comparison of certain qualities or characteristics. We will have cause to examine this later in the thesis when we explore the understanding of personal particularity. Distinguishing on the basis of qualities is the primary way in which we can claim to distinguish one person from another. This is exactly what the Cappadocians will not allow in their description of the three persons of the Trinity who may only be qualified on the basis of their relations to each other or on the order of origin.

3.3. Distinction Through Relations

The Cappadocian Fathers are thus careful to insist that the only absolute qualification which can be made of the three persons is their relations one to another.⁸³ The three persons reveal who they are in relation to each other. Therefore the names Father and Son speak of relationships which identify the two as distinct persons yet establish their identity as comparative only to each other. The Fathers moved from this affirmation to include the Spirit

⁸² Basil, p. 116-117.

⁸³ Nyssa notes that the terms of origin must not be used to deny the essential relatedness of the Father and the Son. *Adv. Eun.* Bk 2:9.

who is the third person of the Trinity identified as distinct only in relation to the Father and the Son.⁸⁴ Nyssa criticises Eunomius, for

everyone, when the words father and son are spoken, at once recognises the proper and natural relationship to one another which they imply. This relationship is conveyed at once by the appellations themselves. To prevent it being understood of the Father, and the only begotten Son, he robs us of this idea of relationship.⁸⁵

These interrelationships are not to be viewed as characteristics of the persons nor their operations, but are constitutive of the hypostases. The three persons do not exist apart from or before their relations, nor do their relations exist apart from the persons, the relations are essential aspects of their nature. All other names, besides Father, Son and Spirit, which may be given to the three persons, while descriptive of their nature and qualities, are at best analogous. This means that the identity of the three is relative only to each other, there is no higher form or principle which exists next to or beyond God.

This points us to a second qualification which is that the differentiation of the three from each other, while being a clear distinction, is not a distinction on our terms but a distinction on God's terms. God *ad intra* is not dependent upon humanity for distinguishing one person from another for each is distinct in relation to each other. This in turn leads us to two assumptions: the first is that their distinctness is enduring and not simply connected to revelation of God *ad extra*; and secondly that the distinctness of their persons can never be understood in abstraction. The Godhead is complete in its own triunity, there is no need for any other entity to give identity or being to the three who know each other in their relations to each other. This also means that we can never declare them to be distinct on the basis of our understanding as we examine them in a purely objective manner, but can only understand them as being distinct as we ourselves approach them from how they have shown themselves to be. It is only as we know the Son as the Son of the Father that we can speak of the Father who is revealed by and distinguished from the Son only in so far as he is the Father of the Son.

84 Affirming an identity for the Spirit, as constituted only in relation to the other two persons is not immediately evident. The Fathers made this affirmation based upon the precedence of the Father/Son relationship.

85Nyssa, *Adv.Eun.*, Bk. 1:14. Nazianzen, Or 31:9.

4.1. Dynamic and/or Substantial Unity

When Zizioulas claims that the Cappadocians were proposing a radical revision of ontology one of the central tenets of his claim is that in their writings they were outlining a concept of *Being as Communion*. The title of Zizioulas' book underlines his belief that in the Cappadocians' work is to be found a radical revision of traditional notions of ontology. Central to this claim is the suggestion that they were proposing a shift from 'substantial' notions of being to a dynamic relational notion of being as communion. Zizioulas claim that he is simply recovering patristic categories is challenged by McFarlane, who among other writers, criticises him for denying that the Cappadocians equated ousia with substance.⁸⁶ Wilkes is even more direct in his criticism of Zizioulas. 'His entire attitude to the ousia is so negative that it is difficult to see that he can actually support the one ousia, three prosopa statement that he quotes.'⁸⁷ There certainly is a tendency in Zizioulas to take an anti-essentialist stance to the degree that he at times seems to deny any concept of substance.⁸⁸ Yet, in light of the philosophical tradition's identification of being with 'underlying' substance, Zizioulas' apparently existential emphasis upon the person rather than substantive essence is understandable. However, it must be emphasised that Zizioulas' concern, which is clearly in keeping with the concerns of the Cappadocians, is not to deny the ontological significance of the ousia of God but to avoid perceiving the ousia as the static irreducible essence which lies behind the revealed Godhead;

If God's being is by nature relational, and if it can be signified by the word 'substance', can we not then conclude almost inevitably that, given the ultimate character of God's being for all eternity, substance, in as much as it signifies the ultimate character of being, can be conceived only as communion?⁸⁹

⁸⁶ 'In *BC* Zizioulas argues for a particular interpretation of Cappadocian ontology. He argues that Basil, in re-defining 'person' introduces a new philosophical concept: a fact the history of philosophy has not noted...However, is his a fair presentation of what the Cappadocians themselves argued? It would appear not, for they held in tension both the substantial and the personal.' Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit: The Doctrine of Christ according to Edward Irving*, (Exeter; Paternoster Press, 1996), p.45.

⁸⁷ Wilkes criticises Zizioulas for misrepresenting the Cappadocians understanding of Ousia. Wilkes, *The Trinitarian*, p.80-82.

⁸⁸ Zizioulas has certainly not gone as far as Volf who suggests 'it is advisable to dispense entirely with the one numerically identical divine nature and instead to conceive the unity of God perichoretically. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p.203.

⁸⁹ *BC* p. 84.

His reticence is not with the idea that there is a substantial 'whatness' to the being of God, but that this 'whatness' might be seen as the static protological essence of God. Let us briefly return to the Cappadocians writings to see if there are grounds for Zizioulas' claim that ousia equals communion.

The identification of the Father Son relationship, which Athanasius emphasised as central to the being of God, would alone be grounds for arguing that the notion of substantialist ontologies needed to be redressed.⁹⁰ However, the Cappadocians were much more explicit as they spoke about the dynamic unity of the three persons. God is not sometimes one and sometimes three persons but is always a "conjunction" of persons or a "community of nature" (κοινωνία).⁹¹ For Basil with his strong belief in the importance of community⁹² there were obvious parallels with his understanding of the earthly communities and the triunity of God. It was a natural projection of his understanding of the relational unity of God and an obvious step with which to speak of God's nature. When the unity of God is spoken of as communion, conjunction or community the apparent danger is that it may be easy to see the unity as something anterior rather than integral to the persons. Which is certainly part of the reason why the Cappadocians themselves are accused of failing to emphasise the 'substantial' unity of God.

The analogy of community would appear to make Basil's position particularly susceptible to a weak or generic sense of unity. Yet, his clear desire is to point to something which is greater than this analogy 'in the case of the divine and uncompounded nature the union consists in the communion of the Godhead.'⁹³ The significant emphasis in this sentence is that the unity of God is both an uncompounded nature and communion and this is quite different from any reference to a human analogy of community due to a shared nature, or a community of persons who identify themselves with each other. While all human beings are derived from, or begin with, the one human nature, the tendency is toward division and disintegration. The contrast between human beings is more apparent than any perceived

90 We will be taking up that issue in the next chapter.

91 Basil Ep. 38, 189:7-8, 210:4-5.

92 Basil is acknowledged as one of the Fathers of the monastic movement in the East. In the East under Basil, the emphasis was very much upon entering into community life rather than the individual retreat associated with western monasticism. See Metropolitan Georges (Khrodor), 'Basil the Great: Bishop and Pastor' *SVTQ* 29:1, 1985, pp. 5-27.

93 Basil, *De Sp. St.* 45.

unity. The unity of God is not an operation or function of the three persons but an objective reality with ontological status. Basil says "A certain communion indissoluble and continuous".⁹⁴ The eternal aspect of the triune nature of God is clearly something which differentiates his communion from ours.⁹⁵ It is important to emphasise that Basil was trying to point to the mystery of God's unity rather than suggesting that human communities might provide the paradigm of what God's nature must be, a position he was able to assume because of the Fathers' affirmation of the distinction between the created and the uncreated.

Clearly, Zizioulas is not wrong to have suggested that the Cappadocians used the term *koinonia* in speaking of the unity of God. However, there is a difference in how the Cappadocians locate this communion. Basil used the term *community of nature* not *community of persons* or *community of hypostases*.⁹⁶

But the communion and the distinction apprehended in them are, in a certain sense, ineffable and inconceivable, the continuity of nature being never rent asunder by the distinction of the hypostases, nor the notes of proper distinction confounded in the community of essence.⁹⁷

The communion of God is not something which is anterior to the persons, but coincident with the persons: 'Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but in them is seen a certain communion indissoluble and continuous'.⁹⁸ Using the term *community of nature* leads to the understanding that the unity is not something outside of the three persons nor is it something which follows on from the three persons, instead the union is part and parcel of who the three persons are. When the Cappadocians used the notion of communion they were not displacing the term *ousia* in favour of a notion of communion of

94 Basil, Ep. 38:4.

95 Although the Cappadocians did not use the term *perichoresis* or even adequately develop the term *coinherence* there is no doubt that they laid the ground work for it in their clarification of the basis of the unity of the three persons. Although Nazianzen used the term *perichoresis* to refer to the unity of the two nature in Christ, it wasn't until the time of Pseudo-Cyril that it was used to refer to the unity of the persons in the Trinity. See Verna Harrison, 'Perichoresis in the Greek Fathers', *SVTQ* 35-1 (1991), pp.53-65.

96 While the term *community* or *koinonia* of nature is clearly a major aspect of Basil's argument in clarifying the doctrine of the Trinity, it is not utilised to the same extent with both Gregories. Nyssa in particular doesn't seem to use it in the same way as Basil has so clearly attempted to do. Nazianzen while using the principle of the concept develops it in different ways.

97 Basil, Ep. 38:4 (There are many who believe this letter should be attributed to Gregory of Nyssa and not Basil).

98 Basil, Ep. 38.

persons, for to simply propose that the unity of God was a *product* of the communion of persons would be tritheistic. The Cappadocians clearly sought to maintain the paradox of the God who is at once three and one.

Clearly the concern not to collapse the formula of the one ousia and three hypostases into a simple equation, forces us to ask if Zizioulas is not in danger of doing exactly that when he equates the ousia with the koinonia of the three persons.⁹⁹ For if the oneness of God is simply equated with the communion of the three persons then we are in danger of turning the paradoxical formula into an logical equation.¹⁰⁰ Yet, to suggest that the koinonia is in anyway distinct from the hypostases, remains in danger of establishing the ousia as something other than the persons. Although the Cappadocians speak of a communion of essence rather than a communion of persons they are equally concerned to affirm that the unity is integral to the persons. Nazianzen reflects this notion of communion in a very clear statement locating unity within the particular persons rather than seeing it as something *produced* by, or existing apart from them.

But each of these Persons possesses Unity, not less with that which is limited to it than with itself, by reason of the identity of essence and power.¹⁰¹

Noting that the unity of the three persons is an identity of essence and power is a considerable qualification suggesting that the three begin and end in unity; not only are they united in their essence or nature but they are also united in their operation. In fact, it seems as though the key issue in this situation is to affirm the real ontological content to both the terms ousia and hypostasis without allowing that they are 'distinct' categories. This is clearly what Zizioulas intends as he continues to maintain the dialectic of the one ousia , three hypostases.

99 Wilkes, *The Trinitarian*, p. 70-71, criticises Zizioulas for failing to address the issue of how the ousia is related to the hypostases. We would suggest that what needs to be emphasised is not how the ousia and the hypostases can be understood to 'relate' to each other, but, that the oneness and threeness of God must be held at the same time. If we return to our discussion of Nazianzen's formula, *the three in one and the one in three*, we will remember that one of the purposes of the formula was to deny the possibility of applying mathematics to understand how God is both one and three. We would argue that to attempt to establish the way in which the ousia of God is 'related' to the hypostases of God can easily slide into an attempt to add together or equate the two poles of a paradox.

100 Which is why there remains the need to use the term homoousios as a positive affirmation and not simply as a negative affirmation as Zizioulas argues in *The Teaching of the Second Ecumenical Council*, 1983, p.34.

101 Nazianzen, Or 31:16..

The nature of God is communion. This does not mean that the persons have an ontological priority over the one substance of God, but that the one substance of God coincides with the communion of the three persons.¹⁰²

In speaking of the unity of God we must be careful that, when we use the term communion, we are not slipping into an analogy which would imply that the unity of the Godhead follows on from the persons for that would imply tritheism. We must somehow allow that the unity of the Godhead is a unity which coincides with the distinction of the persons. We should not forget that 'the unity of the revealed God is differentiated from everything else that may be called unity'.¹⁰³ The legitimacy of speaking of the relational unity of the three persons will be something we examine more closely in the next few chapters and particularly in chapter two where we look at the notion of the Father as cause.

Conclusion

It is clear from this chapter that the Cappadocian perspective, which led to the development of the doctrine of three hypostases in one ousia, does reveal a unique appreciation of God's being. This perspective has value, especially in the West where the perception of God's being has tended towards a static and monistic unity. The great difficulty with focusing primarily upon the unity of God is that it is almost natural to suggest that the unity is in some way independent of or primary to the particular persons. Thus one either posits the unity as the true and 'simple' God lying beyond the three manifestations, or suggests that the unity is a compound of elements which make up a greater whole. Obviously there are inherent dangers in any approach for there are no analogies in creation which can fully express the complexity of God's nature. Nonetheless, we must speak of a dynamic and relational understanding of God if only to make sense of how God, the uncreated, is able to relate to the created world without that relation collapsing into monism. The advantage in recovering an appreciation of the three persons in a communion of essence is that it more adequately ensures that God *ad extra* is held to be commensurate with God *ad intra* by allocating real identity and being to the particularities of revelation. This forces one to approach God as Father, Son and Spirit instead of attempting to speak of God in a generic sense; in short, it

¹⁰² BC p.134

¹⁰³ Colin Gunton, *Being and Becoming: The Doctrine of God in Charles Hartshorne and Karl Barth*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.45.

forces one to remain true to the basis of revelation rather than dealing with God in abstract metaphysical terms.

There is always the danger of the analogies of persons and communion leading to an anthropomorphic tritheism. In the third and fourth centuries in the encounter with Greek philosophy it may have been more natural to look for the eternal form behind the particular existent. Today in a society which is strongly influenced by existential thinking and precepts, the analogy of persons in communion will be understood quite differently. In both cases the limits and possibilities of any analogy must be guided by the distinction that the God who has truly shown himself to us always remains greater than that which we have seen and understood. While these analogies allow an entry into language about God which is appropriate to God, it should not allow its listener to reduce God to a human construct; rather it should force them to realign their perception of reality in the light of a God whose unity in Trinity is always beyond comprehensive objective depictions.

We would argue that when Zizioulas highlights the Cappadocian notion of community or communion of nature he is remaining with the direction of their intentions. He is not seeking to develop a new avenue of speculation into the being of God, but is seeking to define the parameters of the discussion only as far as necessary to remain true to the tradition. In keeping with any such attempt we need to examine the contours of his proposal in order to ensure that we remain true to the dynamic of revelation. Turning now to Zizioulas' understanding of the person we will again examine how he has established the primacy of the person through the notion of the Father as cause.

Chapter Two: The Person of Father

Introduction

Who or what is the Father: the locus of the Godhead, God wholly in himself, the First Person of the Trinity or all of these things? The early debates over Jesus of Nazareth were centred on the assumption that 'Father' was a name for God. Exactly what it means to say that the Father is God was, and is today, grounds for debate. Many terms were used to denote the place of the Father within the Trinity, or his relations with the Son and the Spirit. Some of these terms have been the source of concern especially in the West. Our interest with these terms is to explore the implications they have for our understanding of the concept of persons, both divine and human. Yet, in this paper we will only begin to touch on some of the issues involved in defining a notion of the 'person' and the corresponding term 'relation'. In exploring the modern debate over the terms 'person' and 'relation', we will primarily deal with the Orthodox emphasis upon the Father as cause or the principle of the Son and the Spirit.

John Zizioulas and Vladimir Lossky both hold that the identification of the Father as cause is an essential step both in the doctrine of the Trinity and as a basis for the concept of persons both divine and human.¹ This is in spite of the fact that they acknowledge the notion of causality appears as essentially problematic.² In making these claims for the term 'person', both Zizioulas and Lossky acknowledge that the Fathers did not challenge the notions of human personhood, for the debate over the notion of the person is a more modern concern. Yet, they argue that the identification of the hypostasis of the Father is the starting point for defining the notion of the person. Their concern is to develop and express a concept of the person which reflects the Cappadocian understanding of the particular and that understanding of the particular is perhaps most clearly elaborated in the discussions of the person of the Father. The boldness of their claims has raised much debate in both East and West

¹The Greek Fathers always maintained that the principle of unity in the Trinity is the person of the Father. As principle of the other two hypostasis, the Father is at the same time the source of the relations whence the hypostases receive their distinct characteristics. *MT* p.58. Cf. *BC*. p.41

² Causality, with all of its defects as a term, expresses what it stands for quite well: the hypostatic distinction of the Three which arises from the Person of the Father- a distinction between absolute diversities, brought about by the fact that the Father is not uniquely the essence. *I&L* p.91.

particularly in their dependence upon the notion of causality. One of the chief opponents of Zizioulas on the issue of causality is T.F. Torrance and we will be drawing on his ideas throughout this chapter as we attempt to clarify the fundamental concerns.

1.1. Father as 'Principle'

In order to explore this issue we must begin by establishing the patristic emphasis upon the Father as principle and cause (*arche* and *aitia*). It cannot be denied that many if not most of the Fathers of the Church clearly held to a notion of the Father as the *arche* of the Godhead. The patristic writers were not attempting to establish a new category or to project a priori assumptions onto the being of God. Rather they were beginning from the biblical texts which clearly identified, at least from an economic level, the primacy of the Father over the Son and the Spirit.³ The Cappadocian emphasis upon the term *aitia* does distinguish them from some of the other Fathers. However, they were clearly in keeping with the tradition in their emphasis upon the primacy of the Father.

T.F.Torrance, in the debate over the language of causality, suggests that even Athanasius did not place the same emphasis upon the person of the Father as the Cappadocians. We would agree that Athanasius did not develop the same emphasis upon the ordering of the persons as the Cappadocians did.⁴ Torrance however, misleads us when he suggests that Athanasius located the unity of persons in the One being of the Godhead in contrast to a particular person. For Athanasius' language begins with the particular persons of the Son and the Father. His use of the doctrine of the homoousion is grounded in the assumption that the Father is God. He suggests that the Son is God because he is equal to and in relation with the Father;⁵ thus inferring that the Father is in some sense primary to the Son in the Godhead.⁶ Furthermore, Athanasius does use the

3 'God *simpliciter* is God the Father, the fount and goal of our being.' Gunton *The Promise*, p.168.

4 While accepting the formulation of 'one Being, three Persons' [Athanasius] had such a strong view of the complete identity, equality and unity of the three Persons within the Godhead, that he declined to advance a view of the monarchy in which the oneness of God was defined by reference to the Person of the Father, rather than to the oneness of the Being of the Godhead. T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.17.

5 Athanasius, *De Incarnatio* 17.

6 Athanasius, *Or. Cont.* Ar. 4:1.

language of the Father as *aitia*, as Meijering clearly establishes.⁷ Although, Athanasius does not use it to the same extent or in the same way that the Cappadocians use it, it is wrong to assert that he avoids it altogether. Both the Cappadocians and Athanasius picked up the language of cause from Origen and, as such, they attempted to do justice to Origen's use of it. Although Athanasius prefers the language of arche he is clearly implying that the Father is the 'origin' of the Son.⁸ For example he states that; 'our Lord Jesus Christ the Saviour of all, through whom the Father orders, and holds together all things, and exercises providence over the Universe.'⁹ The difficulty which remains, for many theologians, is that with the primary use of the term *aitia*, or cause, by the Cappadocians, there is the suggestion of undue emphasis being placed upon the Father.¹⁰

1.2. Father of the Son

T.F. Torrance, in affirming Athanasius' approach and the doctrine of the homoousion, places a clear emphasis upon Athanasius' avowal of the full equality of the Son and the Father and his affirmation that the Father never exists by himself but always and only in relation to the Son.¹¹ Athanasius emphasised the Father as 'father' to exclude any identification of the Father as self-existent. For 'father he cannot be called, nor can he be, unless a son exist.'¹² T.F. Torrance suggests that the Cappadocians failed to emulate Athanasius at this point. Instead by identifying the Father as cause they located the Godhead

7 E.P. Meijering, 'Will and Trinity in Gregory of Nazianzen' in *God Being History: Studies in Patristic Philosophy*, (Amsterdam: North Holland Pub. Co., 1975) p.109.

8 'For the Word, being Son of the One God, is referred to Him of whom also He is; so that Father and Son are two, yet the monad of the Godhead is indivisible and inseparable. And thus too we preserve One Beginning of Godhead and not two Beginnings, whence there is strictly a Monarchy. And of this very Beginning the Word is by Nature Son, not as if another beginning, subsisting by Himself, nor having come into being externally to that Beginning, lest from that diversity a Dyarchy and Polarchy should ensue; but of the One Beginning He is own Son, own wisdom, own Word, existing from It.' Athanasius, *Con Ar.* 4:1. Cf. E.P. Meijering 'Athanasius on the Father as the Origin of the Son' in *God Being History*, pp.89-102

9 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes* 47

10 'The Latin tradition was satisfied with a concept of "principle" or "source" which the Cappadocian Fathers replaced by "cause" as the reserve of the Father alone.' Andre De Halleux, 'Personnalisme ou Essentialisme Trinitaire chez les Peres Cappadociens?' *Revue Theologique de Louvain*, 17, 1986, p.265.

11 T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p.8.

12 Athanasius, *Discourse 1 Against the Arians*, 8:29.

primarily in the person of the Father at the expense of the persons of the Son and the Spirit. While we acknowledge this tendency, in the Cappadocians' attempt to establish the particularity of the persons, we must note that they affirmed the Athanasian insistence that the term 'father' implied the existence of a son.¹³ This ensured that the Father could never be identified as self-existent or as existent apart from the Son and by implication, apart from the Spirit.¹⁴

For what mutual relation is so closely and concordantly engrafted and fitted together as that meaning of relation to the Father expressed by the word 'son'? And a proof of this is that even if both of these names be not spoken, that which is omitted is connoted by the one that is uttered, so closely is the one implied in the other, and concordant with it: and both of them are so discerned in the one that one cannot be conceived without the other.¹⁵

To identify the Father as cause is not therefore at the expense of the identity of the Son but in conjunction with the Son. Not only were the Cappadocians and Athanasius attempting to affirm some of the same things but that they were also working from the same basic position. These Fathers together sought to defend a position which established the unity of the Godhead without denying the particularity of the persons.

1.3. Subordination or Equality?

The real concern of many in the West with the Cappadocian approach to the doctrine of the Trinity is that the Father is God in a way which the Son and Spirit are not.¹⁶ The heart of the issue was, and is, about the legitimacy of any suggestion that one of the three persons is 'superior' to the others.¹⁷ The

13 Nyssa argues for no cause beyond the Father for to do so would disallow the Father as his proper name. Nyssa, *Con. Eun.* Bk. 1.

14 Bobrinsky notes that the Cappadocians included the Spirit in this idea of 'the "person" who is at once identified as a concrete and irreducible existent while being inseparably united to the Father and Son. Nyssa conceived 'the Spirit to be an essential power 'self-centred in its own person, yet incapable of being separated from God' 'The Indwelling of the Spirit in Christ: 'Pneumatic Christology' in the Cappadocian Fathers', SVTQ 28-1, 1984, p.63.

15 Nyssa, *Con. Eun.* 4;8. Cf. *Con. Eun.* 2:2, 9.

16 To Athanasius, the Godhead is complete not in the Father alone, still less in the Three Persons as parts of the one οὐσία, but in each Person as much as in all. The Cappadocian Fathers go back to the Origenist view that the Godhead is complete primarily in the Father alone, but mediately in the Son and Spirit, by virtue of their origination from the Father as πηγή or αἰτία της θεοτητος. Newman 'introduction' to Vol. IX in *NPNE*, p.xxxii.

17 Gunton says of the idea of the Father as cause: 'While such a claim preserves the due priority of the Father in the Godhead, I do not believe that it allows for an adequate theology of the mutual constitution of Father, Son and Spirit. Gunton, *The Promise* p.165.

suggestion of subordination remains unacceptable to many in the West. McFarlane draws on Schleiermacher to illustrate the widespread ongoing refusal to accept any notion of subordination in the Trinity.

Schleiermacher makes a very perceptive and critical comment regarding such an interpretation which actually addresses the theological method assumed by Zizioulas... 'they identify the Father with the unity of the divine essence, but not the Son or the Spirit. This can be traced right back to the idea of Origen, that the Father is God absolutely, while the Son and the Spirit are God only by participation in the divine essence- an idea which is positively rejected by what the Orthodox Church teaches, but secretly underlies their whole procedure.'¹⁸

The problem is how to identify that the Father is in some way the 'principle' of the Godhead without allowing for the demeaning of the Son and the Spirit. Identifying the Father as principle must be held hand in hand with a clear identification of the absolute equality of the three hypostases. Zizioulas suggests that Basil's doxological treatment of the three persons, 'Father and Son and Holy Spirit', gives clear evidence that he perceived the three persons as fully and equally God.¹⁹ A clear example of how they tried to hold the two together is seen in Nazianzen's sermon, *On the Arrival of the Egyptians*.

But if anyone be estranged from God, and therefore divideth the One supreme Substance into an inequality of natures, it were marvellous if such a one were not cut in sunder by the sword, and his portion appointed with the unbelievers... if all that the Father has belongs likewise to the Son, except Causality.²⁰

Since the Cappadocians were intent upon maintaining the unique identity and equality of each person, any model which suggests that the Son or the Spirit is less than the Father would be unacceptable. Furthermore to interpret their understanding of causality as a basis for demeaning the Son and the Spirit is to take it out of its context.

Nonetheless, in the attempt to hold together the notion of the Father as the principle of the other two persons there is almost inevitably a tendency to see a demeaning of the Son and the Spirit. When Lossky quotes John of Damascus to support the idea of the Father as cause we can see that the hidden agenda, suggested by McFarlane, has been and continues to be very boldly stated by some Eastern thinkers.

18 Graham McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit* p.64, quoting Schleiermacher.

19 Zizioulas suggested this in private conversation January 20, 1997.

20 Nazianzen, Or. 34:9-10, Or. 2:38.

The Father derives from Himself His being, nor does He derive a single quality from another. Rather he is himself the beginning and cause of the existence of all things both as to their nature and mode of being. All then that the Son and the Spirit have is from the Father, even their very being; and unless the Father is, neither the Son nor the Spirit is.²¹

This highlights the major concern of many theologians in the West with the apparent Orthodox tendency to identify the Father alone as the 'essence' of God.

1.4. Neo-platonic Emanationism

T.F.Torrance suggests that the way the Cappadocians choose to affirm deity to the Son and the Spirit failed to allow for the fact that each of the persons is wholly God. In the progression from the Father to the other Persons they might be in danger of casting

the internal relations of Father, Son and Spirit into consecutive structures of a causal series or a 'claim' of dependence through the Son, instead of conceiving them more, like Athanasius, in terms of their coinherent and undivided wholeness in which each person is whole of the whole.²²

T.F. Torrance is raising the concern that the Cappadocians are using a Neo-platonic approach to perceive how the one essence of God is distributed from the first person of the Trinity through to the other two.²³ Torrance believes that in their singular emphasis upon the Father there is a danger of suggesting that the Son and the Spirit derive their deity from the Father.

There are many others who accuse the Cappadocians of uncritically applying principles of platonism to the doctrine of the Trinity. Weinandy, while appreciating some aspects of the Cappadocians' position, suggests that they confused rather than clarified the terminological advance of Athanasius.

21 MT pp.59-60.

22 T.F.Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), p.238.

23 '[C]ausality to the Cappadocians was a unique sense of cause as comprising and continuous with its effects'. T.F.Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, p.237. Torrance quotes Basil *Con Eun* 1:19,25 *Ep.* 38:4,7 and Nyssa *Con Eun.* 1:36,39,42 in support of his statement.

For [the Cappadocians] the Father alone still embodied the Godhead and the Son was *begotten out of* him and the Holy Spirit *proceeded out of* him. While the Cappadocians were great terminological and conceptual innovators in regard to the Trinity and wished to ensure the monarchy of the Father and the true individuality of the Son and the Holy Spirit, yet because they did not possess the metaphysical acumen of Athanasius, Platonic emanationism became firmly grafted into Orthodox Trinitarian thought, and is present to this day.²⁴

While we will challenge Weinandy's understanding of the Cappadocians later in this chapter, we must admit that some Orthodox thinkers do appear to have adopted platonic concepts and even Neo-platonic emanationism in their depiction of Trinitarian doctrine.²⁵ The danger is in suggesting that the Father is God because he holds or is the essence of God which appears to be exactly what Lossky is saying.

If the Father is the personal cause of the hypostases, he is also, for that reason, the principle of their common possession of one and the same nature; and in that sense, He is the 'source' of the common divinity of the three.²⁶

For Lossky establishing that the 'one' of the Godhead is the person of the Father is a key defence of the filioque clause and a clear attempt to move away from locating being in an primordial essence. However, in his concern to establish that the particular person of the Father is fully God in himself, he is in danger of simply reversing the position of some thinkers in the West. Where some in the West appear to locate the Father in the essence, Lossky appears to be locating the essence solely in the Father. While Lossky continues in the same argument to establish that the Father is eternally related to the Son (in the very fact that he is Father), the damage has already been done, the Father has been isolated as in some way existing or 'being-in-himself'.²⁷

24 Weinandy, *The Father's Spirit of Sonship*, p.13. We have already discussed Weinandy's comments on the Cappadocians use of the term homoousion in chapter one of this thesis. p.20

25 We must not overlook the fact that the Cappadocians explicitly discounted the idea that they were using platonic principles uncritically. Nazianzen Or 29:2 Basil Ep.52:3. The Cappadocian development of the understanding of the ousia (which was discussed in chapter one of this thesis) as the dynamic communion of the three persons which was not contained by one of the three but constituted in the mutual relating of the three would avoid the problem of a platonic essence.

26 *IL&L* p.91.

27 Lossky continues from the quotation above to cite Damascene in saying the Father is always the Father of the Son. John of Damascus in the same passage does identify the unity with the essence of God (or the ousia) as well as with the Father. *AIT* p.61.

1.5. Nazianzen's Modification of Causality

T.F.Torrance, who seeks to mediate between the East and the West, suggests that the Cappadocians even differed among themselves on the issue of causality. He postulates that Nazianzen, in his later writings, eventually moved beyond Basil's 'mistake' of locating the cause in the Father and in fact 'strongly objected to it',²⁸ by emphasising a unity based in God as Trinity and backing down from speaking of the Father as cause.²⁹ We must be clear at this point that this is not simply a issue of terminology; T.F.Torrance is not solely concerned to establish whether or not the Cappadocians used the term 'cause'. He also seeks to show Nazianzen's reticence to use language which located the Father as the One God to the detriment of the other two persons. What concerns T.F.Torrance is any hint that the Father might be identified as superior to the other persons. Nazianzen's language would seem to tread the middle ground very carefully as he allows the monarchy to be identified with the one God without suggesting that the monarchy is identified with either the essence of God or solely with the person of the Father.³⁰

One God because of the Monarchia. No sooner do I conceive of the one than I am illumined by the splendour of the three; no sooner do I distinguish them than I am carried back to the One. When I think of anyone of the three I think of Him as the Whole.³¹

Nazianzen was not proposing something different from Basil who also suggests that the Monarchia can be identified with the one God.³² However, it does appear that Nazianzen attempted to more carefully balance the concern for particularity of the persons while emphasising the oneness of God. Lossky in fact suggests that Nazianzen was actually holding the concept of the one God and the Father so closely together that he is in danger of confounding them.³³ In

28 T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.19.

29 T.F.Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith*, p.239 & *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.138.

30 'But Μοναρχία is that which we hold in honour. It is, however, a monarchy that is not limited to one person, for it is possible for Unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality; but one which is made of an equality of Nature and a union of mind, and an identity of motion, and a convergence of its elements to unity- a thing which is impossible to created nature- so that though numerically distinct there is no severance of Essence.' Nazianzen, Third Theo. Or. 2.

31 Nazianzen, Or 40:41.

32 'Worshipping as we do God of God, we both confess the distinction of persons and at the same time abide by the Monarchy.' Basil, *De. Sp. St.* p. 45.

33 *MT.* p.59.

spite of the care with which Nazianzen spoke of the monarchy of the one God or how he used the notion of cause, we cannot hold with T.F. Torrance in his claim that Nazianzen, even later in his career, denied the notion of causality.

Nazianzen clearly continues to identify the Father as the cause of the other two persons of the Godhead.³⁴ It would seem that while Nazianzen and the other Cappadocians recognised the danger of locating the cause solely in the Father they refused to put it aside as a principle of the Trinity.

We have already noted that where Athanasius was primarily concerned with the danger of Arianism, the Cappadocians, and especially Basil, entered the disputes when the concern was with the continuing question of Sabellianism. Where Basil sought to affirm the integrity of the particular persons and to avoid the danger of identifying a unity of being as primary to the persons, Nazianzen (after Basil's death) was primarily involved in the complex Eunomian debates in Constantinople. Therefore when we look at Nazianzen's references to the Father as cause we need to keep in mind that the debate in which he was directly involved was more sharply focused than it had been for Basil.

1.6. Against the Eunomians

Underlying the discussion of the *arche* or *aitia* for the Fathers was the interpretation of the generation of the Son from the Father. The clarification of the issues arose in the context of debates over orthodoxy. The Eunomians had interpreted the biblical statement of 'begotten' (γέννητος) as γένητος, meaning originated. They used this as a basis for arguing that the Father, as the generative source, was by nature different than the Son and the Spirit and as such was the only true God. The Eunomian position which developed out of a particular interpretation of Origen's doctrine of causality was itself clearly and carefully refuted by the Cappadocians. The Fathers affirmed the biblical statement of generation yet refused to allow the generation to be a reason to suggest any distinction of essence between the persons. The Fathers were also careful to allow no room for the Arian argument that 'there was a time when the Son was not'. They did this by allowing that the generation of the Son is a-

34 Torrance's claims fall down when one observes that Nazianzen continues to affirm the notion of Father as cause at least until 381 a.d. Nazianzen, Or 42:15 written in 381a.d. See also Or.31:10 written in 380 a.d. Meijering affirms that 'time and again Gregory stresses that the Father is the cause of the Son. He denies that this means that the Father is, in time, prior to the Son'. Meijering, 'Will and Trinity in Gregory of Nazianzus', p.108

temporal; there never was a time when the Father was without the Word, or when He was not with the Father'.³⁵ The generation of the Son does not describe how the Son came to be, but how the Son is related to the Father.³⁶ For the Son, although generated by the Father, is Himself unoriginate; 'but the proper name of the unoriginate is the Father, and that of the unoriginately Begotten is Son, and that of the unbegottenly Proceeding or going forth is the Holy Ghost.'³⁷ They qualified the generation of the Son as an eternal generation, thus noting that the Father was eternally Father and the Son eternally Son.³⁸

It is interesting that, in the debate between the Cappadocians and the Eunomians, both parties affirmed the language of cause with reference to the Father.³⁹ The Eunomians used causality to suggest that the Son was not of the 'essence' of the Father who was God. The Cappadocians rather than putting aside the term 'cause', emphasised that it was the *person* of the Father, rather than the essence of God or even the *essence* of the Father, which caused the Son. The Cappadocians did not want to deny that the Father was in some way the 'principle' of the Son. Yet, equally they could not simply affirm that the Son was of the essence of God; for to refute the Eunomians' argument with the simple identification of the Son with the essence of God would tend towards an essentialism of substance. To suggest that the essence of God could be identified solely with the Father would be to deny the assertion that it was the person of the Father and not *his* 'ousia' which caused the Son and the Spirit. Zizioulas argues that for the Cappadocians, 'the introduction of <cause> in addition to <source> was meant to indicate that divine existence does not <spring>, so to say, <naturally> as from an impersonal substance, but is brought into existence, it is

35 Nazianzen, Or 29:17.

36 But the things of God are beyond all this, for with Him perhaps the will to beget is generation, and there is no intermediate action. Nazianzen Or 29:5 See also Ep 38:4.

37 Nazianzen, Or 30:19, CF Nyssa, Con Eun. Bk. 1:42.

38 Nazianzen, Or 29:2, 3.

39 The idea that all things must have their 'being' in some absolute source or sources was a principle of early Greek philosophy. Thus causality or the attempt to find the simple irreducible source of being was part of the philosophers' quest. In the *Phaedo*, Plato says 'generation is, as it were, an ever existing and immortal element in the mortal nature' Reginald E. Allen, *Greek Philosophy: Thales to Aristotle*, 2nd ed. (New York: Free Press, 1985), p. 150 Philosophical interpretations of causality were obviously not compatible with the notion of causality as it was used by the Cappadocians.

<caused> by someone'.⁴⁰ Nazianzen reminds us of their objective: 'lest we should give Essence to the Father but deny personality to the others and make them only powers of God, existing in Him, and not personal'⁴¹ The emphasis that the Son was 'personally' and not 'essentially' caused was the basis of Nazianzen's argument that the being of God, as either Father or Son could not be located in a static essential substance. Let us look more closely at some of the specifics of the argument to illustrate this issue.

Within the debate one of the key questions which was raised was how the will of God was involved in the generation of the Son. If it was a involuntary generation it would suggest that the generation of the Son was a necessary generation, which in turn would imply that there was some higher principle which determined the 'being' of God. This involuntary generation would therefore be a form of platonic emanationism which Nazianzen clearly refutes.⁴² Alternatively, the Eunomians argued that, a voluntary generation would imply that the 'will' of God was in some way distinct from God's being. In other words the very arbitrariness of the 'will' of God would imply that the Son was not of the very essence of God. Nazianzen argued, using the analogy of a human father; because it was the person of the Father who caused the Son the will of the Father cannot be abstracted from the person of the Father.⁴³ In affirming the strong identification of the will of the Father with his person, Nazianzen also affirmed that the 'will' of the Father was not arbitrary or a 'choice' of the Father but, the eternal will of the Father.⁴⁴ By emphasising the Son as generated or caused by the person of the Father, Nazianzen was able to assert that the Son was freely, yet not arbitrarily caused by the Father.

The emphasis upon a personal rather than essential notion of cause should not be taken to suggest that the Cappadocians had moved towards a denial of the

40 Zizioulas, *The Teaching*, p.37.

41 Nazianzen, Fifth Theo, Or 32. (τάλλα δὲ μὴ ὑποστήσωμεν, ἀλλὰ δυνάμεις Θεοῦ ποιήσωμεν ἐνυπαγχοῦσας, οὐχ ὑφεστώσας.)

42 Nazianzen, Third Theo. Or. 2.

43 Nazianzen Third Theo. Or. 6

44 'The how of God's generation remains unknown to men, and that God's will differs from human will, because in God (unlike man) will and action do not follow each other, but coincide.' Meijering, 'Will and Trinity in Gregory of Nazianzus', p.107-08.

'essential' unity of God. They clearly maintained that the essential oneness of God was not to be collapsed into the unity of the persons.

In saying that the one is caused and the other uncaused, we do not divide the nature by the principle of causality, but only explain that the Son does not exist without generation nor the Father by generation... When, then, we acknowledge such a distinction in the Holy Trinity that we believe that one is cause and the other depends on it, we can no longer be charged with dissolving the distinction of the Persons in the common nature. The principle of causality distinguishes then, the Persons of the Holy Trinity. It affirms that the one is uncaused, while the other depends on the cause. But the divine nature is in every way understood to be without distinction or difference. For this reason we rightly say that there is one Godhead and one God, and express all the other attributes that befit the divine in the singular.⁴⁵

Where the identification of the Father as the cause of the other persons would serve to distinguish the particular persons, the distinction between ousia and hypostasis would seem to guard against locating the essence of the Godhead primarily in the person of the Father. Where the Eunomians would allow that the essence of God was *a* cause if not *the* cause of all that exists, the Cappadocians emphasised that within the Trinity the *person* of the Father was the cause of the other two persons.⁴⁶ Not only were they positing a personal rather than essential notion of causality but, by holding the personal cause together with the 'essential' oneness of God, the Cappadocians challenged the notion of static essential ontologies. The Eunomians had argued against there being any distinction in God for 'movement' would imply either necessity or arbitrariness. In holding together the 'simple' unity of God with the eternal distinction of the persons the Cappadocians were inevitably positing movement within the Godhead and by implication a dynamic notion of being.⁴⁷

1.7. Cause: Unity of the Persons or the Oneness of God?

It is often assumed that the Cappadocians attempted to identify the Father as the cause of unity within the Godhead because he had or is the source of the 'essence' of deity. If the notion of causality was intended primarily to guard the unity of

45 'An Answer to Ablabius: that we should not think of saying there are three Gods'. *Christology of the Later Fathers*, Library of the Christian Classics, vol. III p.266-270. Nyssa quoted by F. Watson, Research Institute in Systematic Theology, Kings College, London, Nov. 26, 1996.

46 Pelikan quotes Nyssa who acknowledges and uses the commonplace notion that God is the first cause. Pelikan, *Christianity and Classical Culture* p.67-8.

47 Zizioulas suggests that the notion of cause, as the Cappadocians utilised it, implied a dynamism in the being of God. Seminar presented at King's College Theological Research Summer Seminar, Sept. 1997.

God it would suggest that the unity of God was secondary to the persons, which in turn would imply either Neo-platonic emanationism or a notion of a compound God who is made up of the unity of three distinct persons. It is misleading to suggest that the central emphasis upon the Father as cause was only an attempt to locate the source of unity with the Father; as though having begun with the premise of the distinction of the persons the Cappadocians had to reinforce that they were one.⁴⁸ Certainly Nazianzen, in defending the doctrine in Constantinople, does suggest that the three persons are united because the Father is their cause, but this is not to suggest that the Father is the source of the oneness of the God. We would suggest that the primary purpose of emphasising the Father as cause was not to maintain the unity of the persons but to emphasise their distinction.

But God, Who is over all, alone has, as one special mark of His own hypostasis, His being Father, and his deriving His hypostasis from no cause; and through this mark He is peculiarly known. Wherefore in the communion of the substance we maintain that there is no mutual approach or intercommunion of those notes of indication perceived in the Trinity, whereby is set forth the proper peculiarity of the Persons delivered in the faith, each of these being distinctively apprehended by His own notes.⁴⁹

To assert that the notion of Father as cause was a method by which the Cappadocians maintained the unity of God is to deny their adherence to the formula of one ousia and three hypostases. For the identification of the 'oneness' of God with the ousia could never be identified 'exclusively', with one *autonomous* person⁵⁰ The Father as cause is the basis by which we understand the unity and distinction of the *persons*. Therefore, when we speak of the unity and distinction of the persons we speak of the Father as cause; when we speak of the oneness of God we speak of the one ousia.

48 While T.F. Torrance, in *The Trinitarian Faith*, pp. 237-38, suggests that the need for a basis of unity is the reason for the Cappadocians use of the Father as cause it would seem that this idea was secondary to their primary perspective of maintaining the particularity of persons as the irreducible unit of being.

49 Basil, Ep. 38:4. This epistle is variously attributed to Basil or to Gregory of Nyssa.

50 'They rightly said "of one substance", in order to set forth the equal dignity of the nature. Things, that have a relation of brotherhood, are not, as some persons have supposed, of one substance; but when both the cause and that which derives its natural existence from the cause are of the same nature, then they are called "of one substance".' Basil Ep. 52:2.

2.1. One in Three or Three in One

At the heart of the doctrine of the Trinity lies the paradox of the one in three and the three in one. It will always remain difficult to avoid collapsing this 'formula' into a simple equation. Father De Regnon is quoted by both Eastern and Western thinkers for his statement of this paradox. 'Latin philosophy first considers the nature in itself and proceeds to the agent; Greek philosophy first considers the agent and afterwards passes through it to find the nature.'⁵¹ The logic of this statement belies the struggle to maintain the paradox which has plagued theologians of both East and West. Zizioulas and T.F. Torrance agree that De Regnon's commonly accepted thesis can be misleading. They both refer to the Greek Fathers who stressed the oneness and the threeness of God as the two aspects of God which must be held together at the same time; God who cannot be numbered is neither one nor three, but one and three. In other words, we do not begin by describing the unity of God and then move on to describe how that unity in some way includes a distinction of the three persons; nor do we begin by speaking of the three persons and continue to describe their unity as one aspect of their personhood.

Zizioulas seeks to maintain the paradox by allowing that while we may speak of the oneness of God either in terms of substance or in terms of the person of the Father we are actually speaking of God in two different ways. When speaking of the 'what' of the being of God we speak of the ousia; when speaking of the 'how' of the being of God we speak of the three persons.⁵² These two *ways* of speaking of the 'being' of God are not *mutually* exclusive options between which we must choose; they must both be held together at the same time. As Zizioulas himself clearly states, 'the identification of God with the Father risks losing its biblical content unless our doctrine of God includes not just the three persons, but also

51 Theodore DeRegon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*. p.433. Quoted by Lossky in *MIT*. p.57-58, and by John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: SVS Press, 1974), p.181.

52 In private conversation January 20, 1997 Zizioulas suggested that there are three aspects to 'being': one is the affirmation that something exists; two is the 'what' question, e.g. it is the substance which exists; and three is the 'how' question, it is the persons who exist. Cf. Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of God: The Significance of the Cappadocian Contribution' in *Trinitarian Theology Today* ed. Christoph Schwobel (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995) p.55. Zizioulas identifies the 'how' with the hypostases and the 'what' with the ousia. Cf. LeGuillou, *Reflexions*, p. 460, notes that Aquinas suggested that we may speak of the what and the who of God.

the unique ousia.'⁵³ These two ways of speaking of God's being cannot be identified with God's being *ad intra* and God's being *ad extra*.⁵⁴ To identify God *ad intra* with the 'what' of God leads too easily to the identification of the static essence of the 'transcendent' God as the source of the persons. By using these two ways of speaking, which are not mutually exclusive or comprehensive in their own right, we are enabled to more carefully balance our discussions of the mystery of the triune God.⁵⁵

T.F. Torrance, like Zizioulas, desires to walk a middle path, avoiding the failures of both East and West to hold together a unity of persons in the One God. Although T.F. Torrance prefers to speak of the one Being of God (Which is dynamic and relational), where Zizioulas prefers to speak of the person (who by definition is constituted in relation), both theologians are seeking to confront the static monadic ground of many western approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity. Nonetheless they each continue to remain true to DeRegnon's thesis in some ways by prioritising one of the two approaches to the doctrine of the Trinity.

2.2. T.F.Torrance on One Being, Three Persons

T.F.Torrance, acknowledging the problem with western treatments of the essence as a static something, notes the danger for the East in undermining the ousia of God to the point that it is perceived as generic:

the one Being of God refers not to some impersonal essence, which has often been the problem of the Latin West, nor to some abstract generic notion of being, which has been a tendency in the Greek East, but to the living dynamic 'I am' of the One God, the eternal living Being which God has of Himself.⁵⁶

The emphasis upon the eternal living being of God does suggest a notion of God's being which is not a static substance; however T.F.Torrance's argument at times betrays a willingness to emphasise the being at the cost of the persons.

⁵³ BC p.89.

⁵⁴ We must be absolutely clear at this point that the language of the 'how' God exists is not to be confused with the issue of how God *ad intra* exists as three persons. For we must always remain apophatic with regard to the question 'how' God is God. Zizioulas himself affirms the apophatic limits to the question the how of God. Zizioulas, *The Teaching*, p.45.

⁵⁵ 'The dynamic in God is such that the question as to which is more fundamental between union or communion is inappropriate and fundamentally anthropomorphic or, indeed, cosmo-morphic deriving that is, from a failure to think out of the unique form which the divine communion takes ad-extra.' A. Torrance, *Persons*, p.257.

⁵⁶ T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.19.

On one level there is nothing apparently wrong with identifying the Being of God as the source or locus of the Godhead. The problem, which T.F. Torrance and Zizioulas have already acknowledged, is if we perceive the being of God as something which lies behind the three persons. For if the being of God is in anyway prior or anterior to the persons then we end up positing a form of Sabellianism. It seems that T.F.Torrance, in his desire to avoid identifying the Father with the 'oneness' of God, pushes his point a little too far, so that he seems almost to say that the being of God is that which lies behind the three persons.⁵⁷

Quite clearly, Athanasius' approach to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity took its start and controlling norm from the revealing and saving acts of God in the 'incarnate parousia' of his only begotten Son in Jesus Christ, and moved through the Nicene concept 'of one being with the Father' (homoousios to Patri) to its ultimate ground in the eternal relations and distinctions within the one Being of the Godhead.⁵⁸

There can be no question that T.F. Torrance would want to avoid suggesting that there is anything lying behind the three persons of the Trinity yet his very expression of a progression from Christ to the homoousion to the *ultimate ground* of the one being of God seems to lead in that direction.

Another point at which T.F.Torrance's prioritising of the being of God seems to lead him away from the Eastern position is seen when he speaks of the two aspects of the being of God. 'Calvin distinguishes between subsistentia= hypostasis and essentia, for subsistentia= hypostasis refers to being -in-relation (existere ad alios), but essentia refers to being-in-itself (existere in se, a se ipso).'⁵⁹ We, in contrast to Torrance, would prefer at this point to avoid Calvin's suggestion that the ousia or the 'one' can be identified as being-in-itself. To identify the essence of God as being-in-itself is legitimate in so far as it emphasises both the integrity and simplicity of God. The difficulty is that it lends itself all too easily to the idea that the 'essence' of God (identified with the oneness of God as opposed to the threeness of God, and furthermore, almost identified with God *ad intra*) is the pure or simple substratum which lies behind

57 He affirms Calvin in identifying the persons as subsistent in the one being of God. Subsistent is not being for although it is joined by an indivisible nexus it is not simply to be equated with it. T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.69.

58 T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.9.

59 T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.28.

the three persons.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, we would prefer Calvin's formula to T.F. Torrance's own formula of 'one Being, three persons', for when we align Torrance's formula with the patristic formula of one ousia and three hypostases the clear implication is that the ousia is equated with the being of God. It is this implication which would clearly conflict with the thrust of this chapter that the persons are not adjuncts to the 'one being' of God. At least Calvin is clearly identifying that we must acknowledge that both the hypostases and ousia are 'ways' of speaking of the being of God. Yet, we would suggest that if in contrast to the language of being-in-itself, we identify the oneness of God with the ousia and refer to it as being-as-communion (or even being as love), we may establish that it is never a static substance but the dynamic perichoretic being of God.

In the concern to avoid any implications that the persons are self-existent T.F. Torrance seems to interpret Nazianzen and Athanasius through the western perspective of the 'relations' subsisting in the one being of God.⁶¹ There is one point where Nazianzen identifies the person of the Father with the relation between the Father and the Son.⁶² However, the identification of the relations as internal to the one being of God is in fact subtly different to Nazianzen's association of the relations with the persons rather than with the one substance or essence of God.⁶³ The relations must be ontological but the persons must not

60 Gunton, *The Promise*, p.170, criticises Calvin on this same point: 'It does seem that Calvin here commits the characteristic sin of Western trinitarianism, of seeing the persons not as constituting the being of God by their mutual relations but as in some way inhering in the being that is in some sense prior to them.'

61 'The account that Gregory the Theologian offers us of the Holy Trinity represents a dynamic development of the Athanasian doctrine of the real relations dwelling consubstantially within the unitary Being or *ousia* of God.' T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.33. Zizioulas also says 'of crucial significance is Gregory's interpretative reference to the three divine persons as relations or schesis eternally and hypostatically subsisting in God which are strictly beyond all time, beyond all beginning and beyond all cause.' *BC*, p.27.

62 Nazianzen, Third Theo. Or. 16.

63 'But the difference of manifestations, if I may so express myself, or rather of their mutual relations one to another, has caused the difference in their names.' Nazianzen Fifth Theo. Or. 9. Nazianzen does not suggest the persons inhere in the one being of God; 'When we look at the Godhead, or the First Cause, or the Monarchia, that which we conceive is one; but when we look at the Persons in whom the Godhead dwells, and at those who timelessly and with equal glory have their being from the first cause- there are three whom we worship.' Nazianzen, Fifth Theo Or. 14. Cf. Or 31:16.

be collapsed into the relations.⁶⁴ T.F.Torrance's concern to offer an alternative to identifying the Father with the Godhead in the end seems to lend some truth to Zizioulas' position, that an emphasis upon the 'one being' can deny the persons.

2.3. Zizioulas on the Person

Zizioulas maintains the distinction of the three by identifying 'person' as the primitive ontological category.⁶⁵ He insists that there is a simple choice; if we do not maintain the *person* of the Father as the cause of, or as primary to the Godhead we will inevitably perceive the three persons as emerging from a pre-existent substance.⁶⁶ In interpreting Athanasius (in a very different way from T.F.Torrance) Zizioulas goes so far as to suggest that Athanasius rejected notions of substance ontologies.

[N]owhere in Platonic or, for that matter, ancient Greek thought in general, can we find the view that perfectness or fullness of a substance is depleted (or eliminated), if a certain relationship is absent from it. Athanasius himself (De Syn. 51) is conscious of this difference between his ontology and that of the Greeks as he rejects any notion of divine substance *per se*, i.e.. without its being qualified with the term Father.⁶⁷

Zizioulas insists that the emphasis upon the persons and especially the person of the Father, overturns substantialist ontologies:⁶⁸

it is crucial whether we identify the One God with the Father or with the one substance. For if He is Father only secondarily and not in his ultimate personal identity, Fatherhood is not the name of God but a name about God.⁶⁹

He argues that it is this identification, of particularity with a existent who is an integrated whole yet is constituted in its relation to another, which underlies a

64 T.F.Torrance does make this qualification 'the persons are more than distinctive relations, for they really subsist in the one Being of God which they have in common.' T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.70.

65 Colin Gunton also argues for the significance of the term 'person' as an ontologically primitive word. However, he does not claim, as Zizioulas appears to, that it is *the* ontological primordial word. *The Promise* p.10.

66 John Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person' in *Persons Divine and Human*. eds. Christoph Schwoebel and Colin Gunton.(Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) p.39-40. Cf. Zizioulas in private conversation January 20, 1997 affirmed that for him there are only these two alternatives.

67 BC p.85.

68 'That is to say the substance never exists in a naked state, without "a mode of existence". And the one divine substance is consequently the being of God only because it has these three modes of existence. Which it owes not to the substance but to the person, the Father.' BC, p.41.

69 Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of God', p. 60.

metaphysic that is foreign to the philosophical thought of that age. Zizioulas continues by arguing that the Council of Constantinople sought to affirm that the Son was from the person and not the substance of the Father. He notes that the council took the step of altering the Creed of Nicea at the point where it referred to the Son as being

from the substance of the Father (*ek tes ousias tou patros*) and making it simply read 'from the Father' (*ek tou patros*). This change at a time when fights took place over words could not be accidental. It is a clear expression of the Cappadocian interest in stressing that it is the person of the Father and not divine substance that is the source and cause of the Trinity.⁷⁰

In simple terms one might say that this is the difference between identifying the unity of the Trinity with someone rather than with something.⁷¹ Yet, in this quotation, we witness a tendency in Zizioulas to collapse the oneness and threeness of God into the 'one' person of the Father. While there are clear arguments to support the identification of God with the term Father, we would argue that this identification must be held carefully with the assertion that the oneness of God must never be solely identified with the oneness of a person.

Alan Torrance remains critical of Zizioulas, suggesting there is a tendency towards contradiction.

It is Zizioulas' contention that despite the fact that 'it would be unthinkable to speak of the 'one God' before speaking of the God who is "communion" it is not only thinkable but necessary to speak ontologically of the one person before speaking of the God who is communion.⁷²

In spite of Zizioulas' desire to hold the hypostases and the ousia in equal tension he clearly devotes his attention to emphasising the *person*. In his concern to avoid any hint of substantialist ontology, he appears to be setting aside the careful affirmation that the unity of God must be referred to as the ousia at the same time as it is identified with the unity of the persons in the Father.

70 Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of God', p.51-52. We must note that others in the tradition such as Maximus and John of Damascus continued to use both phrases at the same time.

71. Torrance is clearly reacting against this position when he notes that 'Calvin considered it impossible to think of the Holy Spirit as proceeding from the Person or Hypostasis of the Father, rather than from the Being of God the Father.' T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.36.

72 A.Torrance, *Persons*, p.292.

2.4. Using the Term 'Person'

The argument regarding the understanding and use of the term 'person' both theologically and anthropologically underlies the whole of this thesis. It is, however, useful at this point to raise some of the basic arguments regarding the use of the term in theological debate. The primary argument against using the term 'person' in theological discourse is that it commonly carries with it the connotations of autonomous or independent centres of consciousness.⁷³

Nonetheless, we would agree with Zizioulas, and T.F.Torrance, that there are grounds for claiming the term person as a theological term.⁷⁴ In the context of Trinitarian theology we would argue that it is better to work to carefully redefine terms which are already established than to seek to posit alternatives.⁷⁵ It is likely that any alternatives will themselves cause confusion and need constant redefinition, given that any term used analogically of God will inevitably fail to fully convey the mystery of God. We would also argue that to use terms which are disassociated from the incarnation of Christ as a *person* who is human and divine, will inevitably lead to too strong a distinction between the revelation of God *ad extra* and God *ad intra*. If however, we are to claim the term as essentially theological, then we need to be very careful to elaborate what we mean by the term and how we intend to use it. Any use of the term person must take into account the wide variety of meanings which it carries with it.⁷⁶ Some people argue that the very flexibility of the term is grounds for continuing to use it in its theological application.⁷⁷

73 It is these connotations which caused Barth and Rahner, among others, to avoid the term person in reference to the divine persons.

74 'It must not be overlooked as Rahner seems to have done, that the concept of person, not known in ancient times either in Hebrew or Greek tradition, actually originated in the early Christian centuries as a product of the Nicene doctrines of Christ and the Holy Trinity, and thus as an essentially onto-relational concept.' T.F. Torrance, *Trinitarian*, p. 99.

75 Kiesling quotes W.J. Hill in support of a general consensus that it is better to seek to redefine the terminology of the tradition than to attempt to replace it. The problem is that 'once the notion of person is abandoned, rather than developed in the light of modern thought, it is difficult to avoid the semblance of modalistic monotheism.' Christopher Kiesling, 'On Relating to the Persons of the Trinity' in *Theological Studies* 47 (1986), p.601.

76 L.B. Porter, 'On Keeping the Persons in the Trinity', *Theological Studies* 41, 1980 p.531, to express the complexity of the term 'person', cites nine different definitions from the Oxford English Dictionary.

77 Alan Torrance, *Persons* p.266.

[I]t might well be argued that in colloquial and literary discourse it is not so much a conceptually elusive or overly subtle word as it is a creatively allusive word exhibiting a flexibility that is one of its chief virtues and that these very characteristics are what first recommended its use in theological discourse.⁷⁸

As we will explore in chapters four and five of this thesis, Zizioulas' and Lossky's understandings of the term 'person' are different, even though they are both seeking to establish their understanding of the term in Cappadocian theological definitions. The term person, when used in theological discourse must always be carefully 'set' within the whole scope of Trinitarian thought.⁷⁹

2.5. Person-in -Relation

It is the very relational basis of the term 'person' which allows Zizioulas to identify it as the starting point of the doctrine of the Trinity.⁸⁰ 'In God it is possible for the particular to be ontologically ultimate because relationship is permanent and unbreakable.'⁸¹ The person can never be considered as a thing in itself, but is always constituted in relation to another. 'The person cannot exist without communion; but every form of communion which denies or suppresses the person, is inadmissible.'⁸² In making this identification he at once refutes the notion that we can ever speak of being-in-itself yet identifies the Father as this particular who is primary to being. Zizioulas appears to be doing two things at the same time: he is defining the term 'person' from Trinitarian theology while also affirming Trinitarian theology through the definition of the term 'person'.⁸³

The identification of the Father with the concept of causality is clearly problematic for the affirmation of the notion of the person. One difficulty is that the language of 'cause' is itself grounded in essentialist principles. To utilise the notion of causality to affirm the ontological primacy of the term person creates the danger of collapsing the paradoxical formula which is the very basis of

78 L.B. Porter, 'On Keeping the Persons in the Trinity', p.533.

79 Which is why, for example, we argued in chapter one that LaCugna's use of the term 'person', to guard the 'unknowability' of God, was not adequate. Rather it must be held in the context of a clear distinction between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*.

80 'Father' by definition is a relational term (no father is conceivable without a son). BC, p.85. Cf. p.86.

81 Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person', p.41.

82 BC p.18.

83 Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person', p. 40.

defining the term person in the first place. Causality points to a notion of movement in the context of the formula of the one in the three; it helps to affirm that God is not a static essence but a dynamic and relational being.⁸⁴ We maintain a dynamic rather than a static notion of God's being because of the paradox of holding together the two ways of speaking of the being of God, the one ousia and three hypostases. In so far as the use of the concept of causality might be used to overturn the whole approach to substantialist ontologies it is a good rhetorical tool. However, the term cause should not be used to establish the notion of the person as ontologically primordial to the being of God, but to affirm that within the formula of the one ousia and three hypostases neither the persons nor the simple unity can take precedence over the other. It does not and should not suggest that we can locate the unity of God solely in the person of the Father. We would agree that we cannot perceive substance as ontologically primary; yet, to posit the particular as ontologically primary in contradistinction to the substance of God would seem in danger of replacing the one substance with the *substance* of a particular.

The term person cannot in itself serve as the basis for a notion of unity in diversity. It is only as it is held within the context of the doctrine of the Trinity that we can claim a definition of the term which overturns popular autonomous concepts of the person. As such our path is first to seek to define the term person through founding it in the understanding of the paradox of the doctrine of the Trinity, and directly through the incarnation of the Son. From there we may continue to affirm that the term person may be used to locate real ontological content to the particulars, in so far as our understanding of the being of God establishes that content.

3.1. The Ordering of the Persons

If we are to utilise a concept of the person in both our doctrine of the Trinity and theological anthropology we will need to be clear in how we are defining the term. Given Zizioulas thesis, and the claim of this chapter, that person means

84 The traditional notion of cause suggests a unidirectional relationship in which that which is caused is not reciprocally related, nor ontologically related, to the cause. Nazianzen clearly redefined cause to include reciprocity, however, the term itself should not be isolated from the formula within which it was used. In other words the term cause, when identified with the Father, is used to affirm that the oneness of God does not take precedence over the three persons who are constituted in relation to each other.

person-in-relation, we must take some time to clarify the understanding of the notion of relation in terms of the question of ordering or τάξις in the doctrine of the Trinity. The question of the ordering of the divine persons is a direct implication of the notion of causality. The scope of this chapter only allows us to begin to explore what is involved in the understanding of the concept of relations.

Earlier in this chapter, we explored the question of whether or not the Cappadocians and the Orthodox Church after them, have simply used Neoplatonic principles in their description of the ordering of the persons. If we emphasise the ordering as the basis of the persons' deity then we are in danger of positing a platonic principle of derived deity. The relations of the persons would be based upon a 'materialist' sharing of the same substance whether it is replicated as an ideal form or partitioned as in an Aristotelian model. In either case the relations would define the persons or become the content of the persons. Rather than constituting each other in their relations the three would be seen to be constituted by an ordering which takes precedence over the persons. Neither can we allow that the relations are simply the action or choice of the persons.⁸⁵ This would be the danger if our understanding of the communion of the divine persons was correlated too closely with a human analogy of community and the relations were perceived as anterior to the persons. This is not adequate either, in so far as it fails to establish that the unity of the three persons as an absolute unity. What we need to maintain is the relations of the persons are not external to the persons nor are they prior to the persons. Instead the relations as ontological aspects of these particular persons are essential in their constitution and yet do not exist apart from or above the persons.

The question of the equality of the three persons who are each whole of the whole while being inseparably united as the One God is right at the heart of all Trinitarian depictions and it also has important implications for how we perceive what it means to be a person. T.F. Torrance in taking issue with a hierarchical ordering of persons of the Trinity, is raising a real concern. While he allows that the ordering of the persons within the Trinity is a real ordering he suggests it is

⁸⁵ Basil discounts 'relations of brotherhood' as analogical of the relations of the persons of the Trinity because they are too abstract, in failing to note the unity of substance. Basil, Ep.52:3.

not an ontological ordering that would deny the equality of the persons.⁸⁶ He says of Calvin, '[T]hus like Cyril of Alexandria he interprets the words of Jesus, "the Father is greater than I", not ontologically but soteriologically and economically.'⁸⁷ Lossky seems to side with T.F. Torrance here in suggesting that the ordering of the persons cannot be true of God *ad intra*:

This is why in the realm of divine manifestation, it is possible to establish an order of persons (τάξις) which, strictly speaking, should not be attributed to Trinitarian existence in itself, despite the 'monarchy' and 'causality' of the Father: these confer upon Him no hypostatic primacy over the other two hypostases.⁸⁸

This agnostic approach to the implications of the ordering of the persons for God *ad intra* is credible in so far as the incarnation of the Son must make some difference in the way in which the persons are related to each other.⁸⁹ Yet if we are to maintain that the economic Trinity is not a projection but true of and in fact continuous with God *ad intra*, we must allow that the ordering is not simply economic. If the ordering of the persons is not true to the being of God then how can we maintain that the one being of God is not prior to its expression in the three persons?

Alan Torrance allows that the relations of origin are to do with the ontological grounding of the persons yet seeks to distinguish them from the relations of communion.⁹⁰ This is an important point to make as it establishes that the relations of the persons are not confined to a particular ordering as though this τάξις was determinative of the way the persons are and relate. In speaking of God *ad intra*, he would say that we may speak of the Father, Son and Spirit without attempting to draw too many inferences from those names. While he

86 'While Calvin like Gregory Nazianzen, seeks to give full weight to the biblical order in the relations between the three divine Persons, he makes sure that this is not allowed to carry over into his thought any element of subordinationism.' T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p. 32.

87 T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.32.

88 *I&L* p.92-93

89 In regard to the issue of the ordering of the persons Torrance would prefer to move away from the language of cause: 'ought we to allow our understanding of God's self revelation to be limited by ethnic linguistic conventions.' T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p.19. Alan Torrance, Research Institute in Systematic Theology, Kings College, London, Nov. 19, 1996, speaking of the use of the term 'father' of the first person of the Godhead suggested that we need to be careful in pleading semantic agnosticism as we might lose our critical controls. Surely at the point of dealing with the relational constitution of the three persons we must be especially careful to avoid using social norms to establish the principles of divine relationality.

90 Alan Torrance, *Persons*, p.254.

would emphasise that the Father and the Son and the Spirit are true of God *ad intra* and are not simply manifestations of God in the economy he would also hold that there is no inherent ordering of the persons to be discerned from the description of the Father and the Son. He is concerned that we should not assume any subordination from ascribing the terms Father and Son to the persons of the Trinity.⁹¹

We would argue that the danger in stressing the disjunction is that the terms may be so completely deprived of their meaning that they no longer serve as analogies in any sense of the word. Furthermore, the biblical and credal statements regarding the generation of the Son, and the identification of God with the Father, would seem to imply that there remains some sense in which the ordering of the persons is not an ordering which is solely economic and soteriological. While we must not circumscribe the relations of the persons within a structure of ordering we, equally, would not disassociate the ordering of the persons from the relations of communion.

What we would be concerned about is the subliminal valuing of a concept of 'free' relating, unconstricted by any ordering, above the specific taxis of revelation. The danger is that we might uphold an ideal of free relations where the emphasis is placed upon each person 'choosing' who they relate to and with. The freedom of the relations of the persons of the Trinity is not that they *choose* to relate to each other as though the persons first exist and then relate. Rather the freedom in relation is the continual reciprocal affirmation of the Son in response to the Father and the Father in response to the Son.⁹²

One difficulty with any attempt to reduce or understate the ordering of the divine persons is that it seems to be based in an a priori concern to establish the

91 The Cappadocians note that even the terms Father and Son cannot be directly applied to humanity. Speaking of God's relations Nazianzen says: 'these names do not belong to us in the absolute sense, because we are both, and not one more than the other; and we are of both, and not of one only; and so we are divided, and by degrees become men, not perhaps even men, and such as we did not desire, leaving and being left, so that only the relation remain, without the underlying facts.' Nazianzen, Or. 29:4.

92 Meijering quotes Dodd on this point: "'It is on the assumption of the possibility of *one-sided* causal relations that the whole Neo-Platonic system hinges", Gregory on purpose uses the same word when he speaks of the relation of the Father to the Son and of the Son to the Father, see e.g. *Oratio III 16*, obviously in order to stress the ontological equality of Father and Son.' Meijering, 'Will and Trinity in Gregory of Nazianzus', p.111.

homogeneity of the persons. This demand for a level playing field without a hierarchy has a basis in the battles against Arianism; yet, in the modern context it also reflects a concern for the equality of persons which too often leads to the demand that the persons are homogenous. However, as we have already discussed and established, for the Cappadocians the ordering of the persons in God *ad intra* is not to suggest that the persons are unequal. Instead the ordering of the persons represented by the terms ungenerated, generated, and proceeding describes how the distinct persons are truly a dynamic unity. While we would affirm the concerns raised with regard to the damage caused by subordinationist views and hierarchical structures we would continue to insist that there is an ordering of the persons of the Trinity that finds its origin in the Father and that ordering must be true of God *ad intra*. God is Father, Son and Spirit eternally. Rather than emphasising an equality of persons which would deny the ordering, we would suggest that the ordering must not in anyway demean the truth that each of the persons is whole of the whole. This in turn cannot help but have important implications for a notion of the person.

It is important, as Alan Torrance has noted, to recognise the limitation to any scheme of ordering.⁹³ Some scholars, following Augustine and Aquinas, argue that even the Cappadocians, by emphasising the equality of persons, demean the importance of their ordering.⁹⁴ LeGuillou argues that there must be an ontological ordering to do justice to the persons of the Trinity.⁹⁵ But he continues by discounting the ordering based simply on the terms of the East (cause-generated-proceeding) on the grounds that it is too apophatic and therefore ultimately inadequate. He perceives that the psychological model is more adequate as it gives specific content to the ordering of the persons. It is interesting to note that if we follow through the logic of the psychological analogy we recognise that the distinction of the three persons within the one God must always be relative to God relating to that which is other. In other words

93 Torrance, *Persons*, p.254.

94 '[T]heir overriding concern is with defending the consubstantiality of the three hypostases. In doing this they allowed the order between the persons to be obscured. This is not surprising when one considers that the prevailing thought pattern in the background of their own thought is Neo-platonic participationism, in which order means a hierarchy of superior to inferior. Against any importation of this into Trinitarian thinking they stand firm.' William Hill, *The Three Personed God: The Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation*, (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1982), p.279.

95 Le Guillou, 'Reflexions' p.455-460.

speaking of the inner dynamics of an individual person only has context within how that person relates to other persons or things. As a result, the force of the analogy may explain how God relates to the world in his economy but it cannot, by the very grounds of the analogy, be held to be true to God's being in se. In which case LeGuillou is left positing an analogy which either erases the distinction between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra* (rendering God in pantheist terms) or he must allow that his analogy describes only the economy of God(something which he has already refused to do).⁹⁶

3.3. Reciprocal Relations

In speaking of the relations of the persons of the Trinity we must do two things: We must maintain that there is an ordering of persons which originates in the Father and is constitutive of the persons; yet we must also maintain that the relations are never one sided but are eternally reciprocated by the Son and the Spirit. 'And the union is the Father from whom and to whom the order of Persons runs its course, not so as to be confounded but so as to be possessed, without distinction of time, will or power.'⁹⁷ In other words the description of cause, generation and procession may be taken to describe an ordering of the persons of the Trinity; an ordering which is not simply a static hierarchy of temporal origination but a dynamic returning movement of communion which never ceases.

To emphasise the responsive reciprocal movement of communion as a dynamic flow we need to establish in what way the Son and the Spirit also relate to each other and with the Father. The Father as *arche* constitutes the Son and the Spirit. The Son and the Spirit in their living out the purposes of the Father and offering back to him the fruits of their labour also serve to constitute the person of the Father. Colin Gunton provides some thoughts in this direction:

⁹⁶ The complexity of these issues is evident in the fact that T.F.Torrance, *Trinitarian Perspectives*, p. 38, appears to be in danger of doing this even though he affirms in the same chapter the need to hold together the economy with God *ad intra*.

⁹⁷ Nazianzen, Or 42:15.

the Father is what he is not only because he begets the Son, but also because the Son responds in the way made known in his obedience as incarnate, and so can be understood to be the one who shares in the constitution of the being of God by means of his eternal response of obedience and love. Similarly, the movement of the Spirit can also be seen to be constitutive of the being of God the Father, in that it is the Spirit who ensures that the love of Father and Son is not simply mutual love, but moves outward, so that creation and redemption are indeed free acts of God, but acts grounded in his being as love.⁹⁸

Developing the balance to the relations of origin with the description of the response of the Son and the Spirit to the Father need not deny the Father as source and would seem to be in keeping with the context of revelation.⁹⁹

Conclusion

The discussion of the divine persons, as we have pursued it, has implications for how we understand the term 'person' and the term 'relation'. Emphasising the Father as cause can lead to perceiving the three as ordered or hierarchical in relation to each other. However, it also affirms that the essence of *being* does not lie behind these particular persons.¹⁰⁰ Establishing the Father as the *arche* or *aitia* of the other persons is not to suggest that this describes what it means to be a person but what it means to speak of this particular person. To say that the Father is the first person of the Trinity is not to imply that he alone defines the term person, nor that he alone establishes the ontological primacy of the person. The Father is never a person as a *thing in itself*, but only in relation to the Son and the Spirit who are fully and truly persons as well.

A danger with prioritising the need for equivalence amongst the persons of the Trinity is that the emphasis upon the equality of persons allows for a free standing conception of the 'person' to take logical and even metaphysical precedence over these particular persons. Rather than assuming *a priori* that the persons must be equivalent to each other if they are to be fully personal, should we not allow the persons of the Trinity themselves to define what it means to be a

98 Gunton, *The Promise*, p.165.

99 Christoph Schwoebel, 'Christology and Trinitarian Thought' in *Trinitarian Theology Today*, ed. Christoph Schwoebel, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), p. 140, suggests, 'giving up the restrictive view of the Trinitarian relations exclusively as originating relations and seeing them as mutual and reciprocal relations, though not of course as symmetrical relations. The mutuality of the Trinitarian Persons, includes both their personal constitution to one another and their personal distinction from one another.

100 Nyssa, *Adv. Eun.* Bk 1:37.

person? In fact, the demand for equivalence can be demeaning, rather than freeing, for particular persons, in that it locates the valuation of the persons in a principle of homogeneity. It is important to maintain that there is no free-standing concept of the person (no ideal form or description). There is first of all the person of the Son who in the incarnation makes possible the application of the notion of the person to the hypostases of the Godhead. It is only through the person of Jesus of Nazareth and the subsequent affirmation of Trinitarian theology that we might equally apply the term person to the Father and the Spirit.¹⁰¹

The unity of the Godhead must be understood in two ways if we are to maintain the orthodoxy of the formula of the one in three and the three in one. On the one hand we must maintain that the unity of the persons is not a unity which can be abstracted from or understood as prior to the persons of the Trinity; it is nothing more than the communion or community of those persons who together are the one God. On the other hand we must maintain that the unity or oneness of God is not anterior to the persons, no analogy of community or even communion can ever do justice to the simple unity of the one God.

In this chapter we have sought to locate the terms 'person' and 'relation' as theological terms which are defined in respect to the divine persons and the unity of the one God. In the rest of this thesis we will be discussing how we might correlate the understanding of the persons and relations of the Trinity to human persons and relations. We would affirm that there must always be a disjunction maintained between human persons and divine persons.¹⁰² A disjunction which the flexibility of the terms 'person' and 'relation' would seem to allow. It is the incarnation which brings us to the point of seeking to hold together the Son as the image of the Father with the claim that we too are made in the image of God.

101 This emphasis is identified by other modern Orthodox writers as a clear indication that the irreducible unit of 'being' is not the essence of the Godhead nor even a concrete hypostasis of the Godhead but a particular hypostasis which is the Father. Jevtich, 'Between the "Nicaeans" and the "Easterners"', p.247, echoes this thought; 'For the mystery of the Christian God consists in the mystery of God the Father, and only subsequently the one essence of the divinity, which in fact is the essence of God the Father.'

102 Zizioulas argues that 'person' must remain an eschatological category. *BC* p.62.

Section B. Person, Relation and Identity in Modern Theological Anthropology.

Chapter Three: Relation and Identity in the Context of Existentialist and Personalist thought.

Introduction

In the last two chapters we discussed the concepts of ontology, person and relation in the context of Trinitarian theology. As we now move to discuss the same concepts in terms of human persons we need to begin by situating our argument in the context of the modern discussion of the terms person and relation. Our quick overview will be all too brief. However, we intend to highlight a few key issues in the history of the debate with reference to some thinkers who have direct bearing on our objective of contextualising John Zizioulas' understanding of person and relation. Our desire in this chapter will be to argue that in using the term 'relations' we need to recover some of its fuller meaning if we are to do justice to the questions of ontology or identity.

1.1. Models of Relation

The word relations which is central to all discussions of identity or ontology, has a remarkably wide variety of meanings.¹ The modern emphasis upon meaningful relationships reflects a concern to speak of a certain type of relations. There is often the hidden assumption that 'personal' relations, defined in contrast to impersonal or 'unreal' relations, are a vital aspect of *individual* self expression and therefore are part of the integrity of a healthy individual. The assumption that 'personal' relationships are the ground and content of 'real' relations is actually a significant narrowing of the historical understanding of relations. This exclusive focus on 'personal' relations intends to uphold free and meaningful relations and yet, because it begins with a premise of the autonomous self and perceives other notions of relations as inadequate, there is a danger that it will fail to deal with the variety and form in which relations must and do take place.

¹ The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists six main meanings for the word 'relation' although it does not encompass the notion of ontological relations which we will discuss later in this chapter. A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, p.259, spells out some of the diverse notions that may be conveyed. 'The term 'relation' can refer to logical relations, the ordering of things, the ontological co-ordinates of a thing or a facet of something conceived with respect to something else. It may refer to genealogical connections, mutual conditions, causal "aitial" or ontological grounds.'

1.2. Essentialism

Descartes is often pejoratively identified as the original proponent or source of the modern problem of individualist conceptions. Without question his emphasis upon the rational capacity as the seat of human identity and ontology opened the door to the development of the notion of the disengaged and disembodied self.² Nonetheless, we would argue that the modern understanding of relationships, in the context of a radically autonomous view of the self, is informed by developments which followed long after Descartes. Descartes was, to all intents and purposes, working with a far more fundamental and ontological notion of relation. Central to his thesis was the notion that humanity was made in the image of God and therefore that there must be a basis by which we might identify an *analogia entis* between God and humanity. His notion of the mind as the seat of 'being' in the human individual was founded upon the biblical idea of humanity as 'made in the image of God'.³ The thrust of his thesis was to determine what it was that made humanity unique; what made humanity 'in the image of God'. He was not looking for individual characteristics for uniqueness as we would today. Thus, far from positing a notion of radical autonomy Descartes was in fact attempting to identify what essential structural element within the human matrix 'related' them to God.

The fundamental problem with Descartes' approach is identified by Colin Gunton. Gunton notes that the development of the idea of the rational capacity as the seat of the image of God and as the locus of 'being' within each individual is derived from a confusion of two questions which he calls the comparative and the ontological questions.⁴ Gunton argues that to combine the question of ontology with the comparative question, what it means to say that this entity is such and not another, is in fact to confuse the issue at hand. By conflating these two questions western thought laid the ground work for isolating the individual

2 Descartes' formula is characterised by Gilbert Ryle as the 'ghost in the machine' suggesting a rational being disengaged from the material world. In spite of Descartes attempts to posit a very close link between the rational capacity and the physical body the latter remained a tool used by the mind. Gilbert Ryle speaks of the elusive 'I' in *Concept of Mind* (London: Hutchinson, 1949), p.186.

3See Edward Craig's *The Mind of God and the Works of Men*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), which traces the influence of the biblical notion of image in the development of Western thought.

4 The two question are sometimes conflated, if not confused, by supposing that an argument for the distinctive ontology of the human might be derived from a comparison and contrast: by means of a quest for ways in which the human is different from other entities. Colin Gunton 'Trinity, Ontology and Anthropology' in *Persons Divine and Human* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p.47.

as a thing in itself and confused both the notions of ontology and particularity. The result of this confusion and the attempt to identify the element or locus of 'being' in humanity has led to the mind/body dualism which is foundational to modern individualism. In locating 'being' in the mind or rational capacity and identifying that locus as the seat of the image of God, Descartes also paved the way for understanding the essential element of being as a static something given to or found in the individual.

Although Descartes' project proved to be a significant step forward in the notion of individual autonomy, it is in fact Kant's rejection of abstract metaphysics which served to establish the break between God and humanity. This not only overturned the notion of a substantial 'relation' between God and humanity but eventually opened the door for the denial of the essential unity of all human beings. Although humanity was like God or related to God in their rational capacity it was a short step towards perceiving this rational capacity as something the individual 'owned' rather than a platonic sharing in 'being' which originated in and maintained its source in God.

Descartes' understanding of the rational capacity as the locus of our imaging God can hardly be understood as a relation in the modern sense of the word. Nor for that matter does it fit within Aristotle's notion of relations either.⁵ In both cases relation is seen to be secondary to being or substance. Nonetheless, we would argue that Descartes' thesis was rooted in an understanding that the ontological basis of humanity was in some way founded upon humanity's 'relation' to God. To be 'related' to another meant that one must share some element or some basic similarity with another. In this sense the relation of humanity to God was identified with the rational content of the individual, a rational content which provided common ground or a meeting point with God because God was also rational. Thus relation, if in fact we may call this relation, was identified not with the active engagement with another but with the constitutive makeup of the individual which corresponded to the other.

⁵ 'In Aristotle, and certainly in logic until the time of Kant, relation is subordinate to substance. Relations are what take place or subsist between substances that are prior to them: something first exists, and then enters or finds itself in relation to other things, which may change its accidents, but not what it really is.' Colin Gunton *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh:T&T Clark, 1991), p.156.

1.3. Hegelian Idealism

Hegel's idealism was a response both to the dualism of Descartes and to the radical autonomy of Kant. Although Hegel was proposing something very different from traditional forms of idealism his vision of total unity remained idealist in its comprehensiveness.⁶ Hegel is significant, for the purposes of our study, not only because of his development of a dynamic notion of relation between the one and the many, but because of his significant impact on Eastern Orthodox thought. 'Hegel confirmed the characteristic Russian tendency to fuse together the religious, philosophical, and the political, and the whole of the enterprise of the Russian religious philosophy reflects this fusion.'⁷ Eastern Orthodoxy was seen to offer a solution to the dilemma of the relation of the general to the particular in combining unity and freedom.⁸ Like Descartes, Hegel and the Russian idealists such as Khomyakov and Soloviev were not trying to remove God from the picture. Instead, they were offering a far more dynamic notion, than essentialists, of how God might be said to be 'related' to the world.⁹ The Hegelian idealists developed the notion of relation in the context of how the many are related to the One. Rather than accept this relation as some fixed platonic element that was located in the givenness of each human being, there was a move towards a far more dynamic conception of reality in which the idea that the one was in the process of becoming meant that the future determines the reality of the many rather than the past or the givenness of the material world.

In identifying the spiritual realm with *Geist*, or some interpretation of the Christian God such as Sophia, the Russian idealists related the Spirit directly to the material world. This overturned the notion which had been established by Cartesian dualism that the engagement of God with the world was primarily

6 In the remainder of this chapter, for the sake of simplicity, we will use the term 'idealists' to refer to hegelian idealism.

7 Rowan Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology' in *The Modern Theologians: an Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed., ed. David Ford (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.500.

8 'The proposition that only Orthodoxy can successfully conjoin the principle of unity with that of liberty has been termed "la these fondamentale de Khomiakov".' Aidan Nichols, *Theology in the Russian Diaspora; Church, Fathers, Eucharist in Nikolai Afans'ev 1893-1966* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.20.

9 'Given the guiding idea of total unity, Soloyvev was naturally stimulated to endeavour to overcome such apparent or alleged oppositions as those between science and religions, philosophy and religious faith.' Frederick Copleston, *Russian Religious Philosophy* (London: Search Press, 1988), p.12.

protological. By insisting that God or 'being' was dependent upon the world for its realisation the idealists were identifying the one as immediately related to the material world. In fact the relation between the one and the many was made so immanent that the 'One' was inescapably related to the many. However, this concern with immanence was not the simple pantheism of some Romantic approaches, a pantheism which arrived at an emphasis upon the organic whole.¹⁰ Instead, for the hegelians, the One was identified as both directly related to the world while still maintaining its identity as something distinct within the world. Where the romantics posited a notion of organic relatedness in contrast to the mechanical relatedness of the essentialists, the hegelians held to a notion of spirit/organic relatedness which incorporated the notion of active agency into the question of the unity of the one and the many. By balancing the concern for the integrity of the one with its active relation to the many the hegelians moved much closer to the modern notion of free relations.

Hegel paved the way for a dramatic breakthrough in the understanding of ontology. By emphasising the self realisation of the subject in a teleological rather than a protological context he located 'being' in the becoming of Geist in relation to the many. This allowed the idealists to speak of a unity which accounted for or depended upon the entities which made it up rather than the entities being determined by the unity or substance which made them up. Thus, they perceived active relations as one aspect of the matrix within which the one and the many existed; relations in the idealists' scheme became integral to the unity of the cosmos.

The panentheist approach of the idealists has much to be said for it in terms of its understanding of the notion of relations. It begins with the notion that relations take place within the matrix of being while also constituting being. Where essentialists used the notion of identity as the basis for applying ontology to the many the hegelians used the notion of relations alongside of or with ontology to allow the many to constitute their unity in and with the absolute subject. The hegelian notion of God's engagement with the world incorporates two key aspects of relation, identity and opposition or otherness. Hegel noted that relation required opposition if it was to be maintained as relation and not

10 McFadyen comments on the danger of a notion of relations which is simply based on physical or organic notions of the one: 'Were social relations to be based on the principles of biophysical relatedness, the results would be disastrous. There would be no means of securing the continued independence and opposition of the other. Alistair McFadyen, *The Call To Personhood: a Christian Theory of the Individual in Social Relationships* (Cambridge: University Press, 1990), p. 64.

collapsed into monism.¹¹ This was in contrast to the essentialists whose concern to deal with the notion of identity in ontology subsumed the question of otherness or opposition in relations. We can see immediately that Hegel has taken a significant step forward in the understanding of relation. No longer is ontology located in a simple concept of shared substance or essence, instead he is attempting to allow for identity and otherness in relation as constitutive elements within the matrix of being. As an attempt to explain the question of the relation of the one to the many it was a significant step forward from the static and determinist ontologies of the Cartesian approach.

Nonetheless there remained much about the idealist system which was unacceptable to many modern thinkers. The most difficult issue was that the one took determinative precedence over the many, so that even though there was seen to be a dynamic ordering to reality it still seemed as though the one determined or was determinative of the reality of the many.¹² If, eschatologically, truth is the full becoming of the One then the truth of the many loses enduring significance however important a role they may play in the realisation of the one. By locating the one as an integral aspect of the matrix of being the idealists overcame the tendency towards division and disintegration in the essentialist notion of the transcendent one. However, their emphasis upon the one 'becoming' in relation to the many meant that eventually this becoming is determinative of the many. The problem is a tendency to

displace God from the transcendent to the immanent sphere, so that the locus of the divine is to be found not in a God who is other, but in various aspects of this-worldly reality. [Gunton] argues that the displacement is damaging and sometimes demonic in its outcome, because only where relatedness is held in tension with genuine otherness can things both human and divine, all be given their due.¹³

Two corollaries of this problem are that it denies any notion of freedom to the many and that it appears to impose an ordering which is more 'real' than the parts which make up a whole. We might note that while the idealist approach appears to be rooted in a far more dynamic conception of the world it is unable to establish space for particularity. In one way or another the one is still perceived as the locus of being, with the many eventually subsumed into the one.

11 Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society* (Cambridge: University Press, 1989), p. 14.

12 This determinism was made more complete by the emphasis upon the rational nature of the one, with teleology pointing to a fully revealed and realised rational order.

13 Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many*, p.6.

1.4. The Shift to the Individual

In response to the determinism of essentialism and idealism the existentialists attempted to begin with the individual and to identify unity or the general only in terms of the individual. The thrust of the effort in beginning from the opposite pole of the argument is to suggest that previous philosophical approaches to the question of the one and the many have in fact been mistaken right from their inception. The existentialists are part of a popular turn to the individual existent in a move away from the abstract metaphysics which had characterised philosophy until the modern age. Yet, they are not always as radically different from the tradition as they may first appear. MacQuarrie traces the development of existential ideas from the early philosophy (including Jewish thought).¹⁴ While Heidegger might pejoratively identify Hegel as the last and greatest exponent of metaphysical schemes¹⁵ there are some ways in which Hegel prepared the ground for the turn to the individual existent.¹⁶ Not only had Hegel sought to begin from the subject but his notion of freedom rooted in a teleological rather than protological approach is foundational to modern notions of freedom. Taylor suggests that in modern thought 'Hegel's notion of Geist has been, as it were anthropologised- transferred from Geist to man.'¹⁷

2.1. Nature to nature

This radical shift is perhaps best understood through a reflection on the word 'nature'. Throughout the history of thought the word nature has tended to be understood as applying to select groupings within the world or even the complex unity of the whole of the world. When the word nature was used to refer to a group or class the emphasis was in terms of the unity of that group, e.g. what it was about them which 'identified' them with each other. In the modern emphasis upon the particular the definition of nature takes a radical shift to begin with the individual. Nature no longer refers to the inter-relatedness of a subgroup within the greater whole, it now becomes the characteristics or qualities of the particular. To speak of an individual's nature is not to think in

14 John MacQuarrie, *An Existentialist Theology: a Comparison of Heidegger and Bultmann* (London: SCM Press, 1955), p.16-17.

15 John MacQuarrie, *Heidegger* (London: Lutterworth Press 1968) p.

16 Colin Gunton refers to Robert Jenson on this point when he suggests that Hegel's only problem was that he confused Geist or God with himself. In which case Hegel might be seen as truly the progenitor of the existential turn to the self. In a discussion at the Research Institute for Systematic Theology, King's College London, October 1996.

17 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, p.141.

terms of how they are related to the greater whole but to speak of what it is about them that makes them who they are, that establishes their particular identity as unique in its own right.

We seek self knowledge, but this can no longer mean just impersonal lore about human nature, as it could for Plato. Each of us has to discover his or her own form. We are not looking for the universal nature; we each look for our own being. Montaigne therefore inaugurates a new kind of reflection which is intensely individual, a self explanation, the aim of which is to reach self knowledge by coming to see through the screens of self delusion which passion or spiritual pride have erected. It is entirely a first person study, receiving little help from the deliverances of third person observation, and none from 'science'.¹⁸

Where nature had been understood as a reference to the unity of being in terms of that which identified an individual entity with a larger group, it now referred to what was unique about an individual entity or that which identified them in opposition to or as distinct from the larger whole.

Where essentialist thought would still allow that this inner nature was derived from the one or the general and represented the way the individual was identified with the greater whole, the existentialist suggested that this inner nature was to at least some degree determined by the choices of the particular. The existentialist would not deny that the sources from which the individual emerged did and do influence the constitution of their 'nature' or identity. However, they would insist that the most important and determinative element in the matrix would be the choices that the individual makes.

2.2. Rejection of Static and Determinative Being or Unity

A problem with the essentialist approach, which we have already mentioned, is that in emphasising 'being' in terms of the one it has also tended to see the one in static unchanging terms. To ensure that the one could truly be the absolute basis of the many, the one was identified as the unchanging, immovable basis of all reality. This static depiction of 'being' proved impossible to align with the dynamic existence of particular entities.¹⁹ The result of the essentialist emphasis upon 'being' was a denial of the reality of the dynamic existence of the particulars. Being became the essential unitive element of all that exists.

¹⁸ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p. 181.

¹⁹ Nikolas Berdyaev in *Slavery and Freedom* eng. trans. (London: Centenary Press, 1943), p.75-6, reflects the existential concern to free the person from static ontologies: 'This supremacy of freedom over being is also the supremacy of spirit over being. Being is static, spirit is dynamic; spirit is not being.'

Existence as the dynamic matrix of life was enabled by 'being' but could not affect or change being which remained the concrete stable element of all that is.

The teleological emphasis, found in the idealist approach, overturned the static essentialist notions of reality in favour of a more dynamic and concrete notion of existence. However, the question which still drove the idealist approach was the concern to understand the basis of 'being' as the unity of all that is. The question of the one was transferred from a static whatness to a teleological becoming although the emphasis was still upon a total-unity.

Perhaps the primary distinction of existential thought is the decision to begin from the individual rather than following the tradition of philosophy in its attempt to establish how the 'one' or an overarching unity might allow for particularity. The existentialist turn to the individual existent located identity in the choices of the particular. In this sense they overturned the idealist concern to perceive an immediate and intimate relation of the one to the many. Where the dynamic matrix of being, for the idealist, would allow identity to the particulars in relation to the realisation of the ultimate purposes and fullness of the one, the existentialist disassociated the particulars from the matrix of being by locating their identity in their self-realisation.

2.3. Self Determination in Freedom

The existentialist concern was to give adequate accounting to the freedom of the particular to direct or decide its own destiny.²⁰ In the development of identity the individual establishes their particularity through effecting authentic choices rather than simply responding uncritically to natural impulses, or what has been given to them.²¹ By reacting in opposition to the natural tendencies which are 'given' to them the individual creates a self which is particularly their own. Sartre is especially well known for his radical view of freedom. 'Since we have defined the situation of man as one of free choice, without excuse and without

20 The libertarian notion of freedom posits freedom to the individual on both ontological and volitional levels.

21 'This modern notion of subjectivity has spawned a number of conceptions of freedom which see it as something men win through to by setting aside obstacles or breaking loose from external impediments, ties or entanglements. To be free is to be untrammelled, to depend in one's action only on oneself.' Charles Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1979), p.155.

help, any man who takes refuge behind the excuse of his passion, or by inventing some deterministic doctrine, is a self deceiver.'²²

The grounds for arguing for freedom is held by Sartre to be that the person defies any substantial definition. Sartre speaks of the paradox of presence in absence in which the physical absence of a individual may make their presence all the more real.²³ The classic example he gives is waiting in a cafe for a meeting with a friend where the friend may be more present in their absence than the other people who are physically present in the cafe. The people who are physically present may in fact be objectified to the point that their existence is no more real than the chairs or tables which make up the cafe. This manifests the truth that a person cannot be defined simply in terms of their physical presence. The definition of personal existence must account for the reality that a person who is simply a physical presence is more an object than they are a person. This is not to be taken in a reductionist sense where we might assume that this apparent paradox means that the physical presence is not the true person but is in fact a mask to the person who is some essential entity which lies behind the physical substance, for it includes but is not limited to the physical presence. This means that to contain or attempt to limit a person through defining them actually depersonalises them.²⁴ The nature of encountering another person is that one attempts to define or describe them, however, this description can never incorporate the whole of a person because there is an openness or creativity about a person which always moves beyond any fixed depiction. The teleological bent of this analysis reflects the definition of freedom which was given to us by Hegel. The difference is that it is now directed towards the realisation of the individual entity rather than the becoming of Geist.²⁵

Sartre's image of the cafe is a classic existential argument against attempts to define the individual on the basis of some essence or givenness which is exterior to their own choices or determination. A person is not defined by the stable

22 J.P. Sartre, *Existentialism is and Humanism*, Trans P. Mairet (London: Methuen, 1948), p.51.

23 J.P. Sartre *Being and Nothingness* eng. trans (London: Methuen 1958), p.9-10.

24 Zizioulas suggests that this is because the capacity to transcend or 'to be unwilling to accept his actual limits and to tend to move beyond them' is natural to the person. *Capacity* p.401.

25 Heidegger's notion of 'being unto death' locates the teleology of the individual in their dissolution. This is not however the nihilism which it might first seem but underlies Heidegger's determination to allow that the identity of an individual is the product of their free choice a choice which is realistically qualified by their death. He is concerned that human beings should live in the light of this reality rather than seeking to project an eternal element into their notion of being or their identity.

essence or element of 'being' but by the dynamic and existential matrix of their life.

We mean that man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world -- and defines himself afterwards. If man as the existentialist sees him is not definable, it is because to begin with he is nothing.²⁶

For Sartre essence cannot precede existence but follows upon it. A person by definition, does not first exist as a static quantity and then live or exist out of that essence. Nor is a person defined by anything given to them or inherent in their constitutive makeup. When a person has not acted there is no essence; the fulcrum of essence is choice enacted. In other words you cannot speak of the unrealised potential in a person as an indication of what that person is, if it is not lived out then it is not real. 'Man is nothing else but what he purposes, he exists only in so far as he realises himself, he is therefore nothing else but the sum of his actions, nothing else but what his life is'²⁷ The human person defies description because they are never static but always growing, always changing. In Sartre's existential argument it is established that to attempt to delimit the individual is in fact to deny the very basis of their identity. The fact that we can never fully objectify another is used as a premise to establish that all particulars remain open or capable of transcending all objectification.

2.4. Rejection of Metaphysics and the Transcendent 'One'

With the modern tendency to begin with the particular there is the assumption that there is no need for a transcendent principle or 'other', for the relations of an individual to other individuals are adequate to establish true identity.

Existentialist thought has tended to put aside the notion of relation to the one, at least as it has been understood in the philosophical tradition, because of the failure to allow uniqueness to the individual entity. In essentialist and idealist models the emphasis upon the 'one' has meant that identity of the particular is not free but determined. So, some modern thinkers have overcome the dualism between the one and the many by attempting to deny the existence of God or indeed any other transcendent. In fact, 'many progressive and influential minds have come to associate any belief in God at all with the suppression of the rights of the many'.²⁸ Given the earlier context of what we have said of Cartesian thought we might allow that the existential focus upon the individual is simply a

26 Sartre *Existentialism and Humanism*, p.28.

27 Sartre *Existentialism and Humanism*, p.41.

28 Gunton *The One the Three and the Many*, p.26.

development of the Cartesian approach. However, that would be to miss the significant shift in thought which is contained in this turn to the individual. Where Descartes' argument allowed for the notion of the autonomous self he himself always understood the self in terms of its relatedness to the one. Being was identified with the individual, yet it was understood in terms of its relatedness or 'imaging' of the one. While the modern notion of the particular begins in a reaction against notions of exterior sources of being or ordering, Descartes assumed the notion of the unity of being in formulating his notion of the individual.

It has taken a radical shift in the perception of reality to allow for the denial of God or of any other universal. The Kantian relegation of God to the spiritual realm paved the way for a total dissociation of God from the material realm and an eventual denial of God altogether.²⁹ The rejection of God is correlated with the rejection of any transcendent 'principle' which might be determinative of the individual.

The fact that the perspective defined by a hypergood involves our changing, a change which is qualified as 'growth', or 'sanctification', or 'higher consciousness', and even involves our repudiating earlier goods, is what makes it so problematic.³⁰

Given the emphasis upon self determination it is hardly surprising that the 'other', and especially any notion of the transcendent one is limited to that which affirms the particular in who they are or who they have chosen themselves to be, rather than suggesting that there is a need to move towards another or the demands and desires of another. 'Having demolished the older visions of cosmic order and exposed them as at best illusion, and perhaps even sham, it left all differentiations of the old society, all its special borders and disciplines, without justification.'³¹ The unity which is now to be sought is individual wholeness rather than a structure which lies outside of or precedes the particular.³² Libertarian thought has supported a move to complete freedom for the individual self with a corresponding denial of any responsibility for the other;

29 The material/spiritual dichotomy, within the Christian tradition, has often veered towards a spiritual/material dualism which is in fact what lies behind Kant's distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal realms.

30 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p.70.

31 Taylor, *Hegel and Modern Society*, 141-2.

32 'Personality is inward completeness and unity, mastery over self, victory over slavery. Dissolution of personality is a falling apart into separate self-affirming intellectual, emotional, sensory elements. The central core of man is broken up.' Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p.134.

the individual is no longer defined by that which lies outside of them but is free to choose their own values.

2.5. Solipsism and Introspection

One popular term used to describe the openness of the human individual is the word transcendence. The idea of an ecstatic transcendence or going out from oneself or beyond the parameters from which a person 'begins' is central to existentialist notions of self definition. The difficulty with this existential notion is a tendency to see self transcendence as a moving completely outside of the givenness or parameters which have defined or constituted the individual. This radical going out or ecstasis could be seen to deny that, at the very least, the 'raw ingredients' continue to define something of what a person becomes. Even more significant is the tendency to perceive the dynamic matrix of the world as an inhibition to true freedom.

Even the existentialists must allow room for some type of relationships.³³ Yet, with the emphasis placed squarely upon the individual they insist on the polarity of interpersonal relating where the relations with others to an extent, deny the person's identity in free choice. Sartre ruminates on the paradox of the social nature of persons.

I cannot obtain any truth whatsoever about myself, except through the mediation of another. The other is indispensable to my existence, and equally so to any knowledge I can have of myself. Under these conditions, the intimate discovery of myself is at the same time the revelation of the other as a freedom which confronts mine, and which cannot think or will without doing so either for or against me.³⁴

With Sartre's emphasis upon the individual the value for any engagement with another is limited to the immediate benefit which it imparts to the self.³⁵ This approach leads to a radically autonomous view of the person and eventually a form of solipsism where no one and nothing can be seen to be primarily constitutive of an individual's choice for self definition. In one way this approach is very difficult to refute for it needs no affirmation by anyone or anything else. Nietzsche is, perhaps, the greatest exponent of the isolated self.

33 Heidegger provides the example of at least one existentialist thinker who did attempt to address the relational matrix of the person.

34 Sartre *Existentialism and Humanism*, p.45. See also Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p.35, 'One is a self only among other selves. A self can never be described without reference to those who surround it'.

35 This utilitarianism finds its roots in Hegel where the one is necessarily dependent on the many for its self realisation. The difference is that the one is now the self rather than Geist.

The new thing in Nietzsche was the man of 'azure isolation', six thousand feet above time and man; the man to whom a fellow-creature drinking at the same well is quite dreadful and insufferable; the man who is utterly inaccessible to others, having no friends and despising women; the man who is at home only with eagles and strong winds; the man whose only possible environment is desert and wintry landscape; the man beyond good and evil who can exist only as a consuming fire.³⁶

For Nietzsche the social fabric within which one lives is identified as part of the determinism which needs to be transcended if one is to be an authentic person. The socially constructed constitution is seen as something which must be overcome or at least shaped and moulded in appropriate ways. Social relations and particularly institutions are often identified as an inescapable evil rather than a good in the flux of existence. M. Naville, in speaking of Sartre, says 'that is why the objective universe is, for existential man, nothing but an occasion of vexation, a thing elusive, fundamentally indifferent, a continual mere probability.'³⁷

It is not surprising therefore that the turn to the self begins with and perpetuates a strongly introspective stance. Transcendence from the world in which an individual finds themselves becomes an escape from the material realm. It leaves the individual with only the 'inner' realm of the self in which to locate their identity. The introspection of the solipsist self collapses the objective world into a subjective relativism. The emphasis upon choice and the radical freedom and self definition of choice can result in a denial of values, a denial of anything outside of the self.³⁸ Thus we see that what is important for Sartre is not what is chosen, because that is always relative; rather, it is simply the fact that one has chosen and in that choice has defined themselves.

For Sartre, almost all the certainties of substantive rationalism have had to be surrendered. Rather the world is technically understood to be absurd. Now, literally, there is nothing on which the authentic self may rely and still be truly for -itself. The self has only its freedom given to it....The result is a thorough going relativism. As Sartre says in the concluding ethical pages of *Being and Nothingness*, ...all human values are equivalent...all are on principle doomed to failure.³⁹

36 Karl Barth, *CD* 3:2, p. 240.

37 M. Naville, 'Discussion' in J.P. Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, p.65.

38 We see this in Nietzsche's interpretation of great thinkers through the eyes of his own perspective; 'He wrote concerning "Schopenhauer as Educator" but the instructive Schopenhauer was admittedly he himself. And he magnified Wagner so long as he could find and represent him himself and his own paganism.' Barth, *CD* 3:2, p. 232.

39 Eugene Borowitz 'The Autonomus Self and Commanding Community', *Theological Studies*, 45, 1984, p.41.

The aspiration to radical autonomy in the end fails to satisfy for it denies the very basis by which meaning and value are derived.

The isolation once attained proves empty -Nietzsche often thought that he lived in indescribable wealth in this isolation, and these were moments when he could beseechingly and yet also angrily point to the fact that he had infinite things to give, that infinite things were to be received from him. But then he had to contradict himself, for how could he give wealth and life and joy in this isolation?
40

In spite of the fact that this perspective lacks coherence it continues to inform the modern understanding of how identity is to be located ⁴¹

2.6. Situated Freedom

The idea of freedom which the existentialists have developed in the context of the individual began with the Hegelian notion of the freedom of the absolute subject. However Hegel's understanding of freedom was directly opposed to the absolute freedom of the individual suggested by some existentialists. In fact Taylor notes that 'Hegel laid bare the emptiness of the free self and the pure rational will, in his critique of Kant's morality and the politics' of absolute freedom.'⁴² To support a radical notion of freedom is to deny the very matrix which constitutes the self. Taylor continues,

the modern notion of freedom is thus under threat from two sides. On the one hand, there is despair about the realisation of freedom, even doubt whether the aspiration to freedom makes any sense, in the face of the irrational and elemental in man. On the other, the ultimate emptiness of self-dependent freedom seems to lead to nihilism. Thus much philosophical thought in the last century has engaged with this problem; how to go beyond a notion of the self as subject of a self-dependent will and bring to light its insertion in our nature, our own and that which surrounds us; or in other terms how to situate freedom.⁴³

There are many elements combined in what Taylor has called situated freedom. We are born into a certain family a certain culture and this defines who we are and what we are. We do not choose this identity, it is given to us. Throughout life we continue to be defined by the necessity of the world and all that surrounds us, by the very physical and biological construction of our bodies. The problem is that there are clear limits on the person's ability to exercise freedom;

40 Barth, *CD* 3:2, p. 233.

41 Alan Torrance refers to the modern emphasis upon 'introspection as a possible and very popular means of access to the nature of the 'I'. This is shown by sociologists to be profoundly destructive and by philosophical argument to be highly problematic' Lecture in Theological Anthropology, Kings College London, Autumn 1994.

42 Taylor *Hegel and Modern Society*, p.158.

43 Taylor *Hegel and Modern Society*, p.159.

any decision which is made inevitably affects someone or something else.⁴⁴ Ultimately this is the reality of our physical world and freedom is at best relative to these givens. Even if we do not view the world as a closed system, but see it as continually expanding and growing, we must admit that the interrelationships of living beings within it cannot be denied without adverse effects on other living beings. It is evident that "every claim to absolute freedom is countered by the argument that its realisation would lead to chaos".⁴⁵

2.7. The Transcendent One

The existentialist turn to the particular when followed through to its logical conclusion, replaces the transcendent one with the self. Thus, it has not solved the paradox of the one and the many but simply reversed the equation so that the 'one' proves to be the immanent self rather than the transcendent God. Philip Mairet, commenting on Sartre's ideal of absolute freedom, says 'but he has not yet worked out for himself the political implications of a philosophy of absolute freedom. If he did this...the philosophic necessities inherent in his fundamental premise would carry him towards a theistic position.'⁴⁶ As Heidegger recognised, any model which purports to acknowledge particularity to the many and not simply the self, must return to the paradox of holding together the one and the many at the same time.⁴⁷ If we are to allow value to *other* particulars we cannot deny transcendent values altogether. In recent years several sociologists in the United States have attributed the disintegration of society and societal values to a loss of transcendents. Whether this transcendent be God or simply some universals which are generally accepted these authors are in agreement

44 Alan Torrance in an autumn lecture 1994 suggested 'The self is irreducibly relational in character. As agent it is irreducibly engaged. It cannot be construed in unipolar terms-either as a self-contained thinking being or as a self-contained self-analysing being. This can be seen at the philosophical and sociological level.' Lecture in Theological Anthropology, Kings College London, Autumn 1994.

45 *BC*, p.43.

46 Philip Mairet, 'Introduction' to *Existentialism and Humanism* Jean-Paul Sartre, p.19

47 Heidegger who in his later work was far more balanced than Sartre, did not deny the problem of the one and the many. What he attempted to do was to posit a dynamic relational flux as the basis of all existence. Therefore, in his model, the traditional debate between the one and the many was replaced overturned. His thesis has been instrumental in redefining ontology in terms of the individual. Setting aside the traditional notions of being in terms of the one he sought to establish being as a question of individual existence. Thus Heidegger criticised philosophy for its concern with the question of 'being' rather than with a concern for 'Being'.

that without some transcendent other there can be no 'space' for individual persons.⁴⁸

Colin Gunton notes that when humanity does not accept the transcendents which are given to them there is the inevitable creation of other transcendents which are perhaps even more restrictive because they are not clearly acknowledged or defined.

When God is displaced as the focus of the unity of things, the function he performs does not disappear, but is exercised by some other source of unity-some other universal. The universal is false because it does not encompass the realities of human relations and of our placing in the world and so operates deceptively or oppressively.⁴⁹

Of course one might contest which 'god' we are speaking of, but the point is that humanity naturally locates or creates some transcendent other (that is if it is not 'given' a transcendent one) in order to establish some kind of meaningful order to human existence. Taylor, in agreement with Gunton, insists that all philosophies which claim to have done away with the need for a transcendent one have in fact instituted a new albeit subtle universal.

Of course, the argument is complicated by the fact that all of these attacks, [on a transcendent one] with the exception of Foucault's, are overtly (and in fact I believe Foucault's are as well, though unadmittedly) committed to their own rival hypergoods, generally connected to the principle of universal and equal respect.⁵⁰

Both Gunton and Taylor suggest that the emphasis upon the priority of the individual at the expense of the one has led to the establishment of a principle of homogeneity where the demand for equality of all individuals in relation to each other has led to a denial of particularity in favour of a bland uniformity.⁵¹ This perspective would seem to reflect Hegel's concern that a notion of radical freedom inevitably leads to a principle of homogeneity. The very principle

48 Bellah et al in the *Habits of the Heart* and Christopher Lasch in *The Culture of Narcissism*, insist that this turn to the particular at the cost of losing the transcendent has led to the disintegration of society and the denial of the particular.

49 Gunton *The One the Three and the Many*, p.31.

50 Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p.71.

51 The assertion of the rights of the many has paradoxically, dialectically perhaps, achieved the opposite, the submission of the many by new and in some cases demonic versions of the one. The logic of this is that when the one is displaced by the many, the displacement happens in two ways: either the many become an aggregate of ones, each attempting to dominate the world, the outcome being those regimes now labelled fascist, in which the strongest survives and dominates; or the many become homogenised, contrary to their true being, into the mass (Kierkegaard's 'Public'). Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many*, p.33.

which the focus upon the particular was to uphold has been lost through the denial of the importance of the universals.

The question is not whether we should allow for some transcendent one or some form of universals but how do we avoid simply projecting a transcendent other to fill the need for some order or structure to humanity. The danger of a projected transcendent has been clearly exposed by the thought of Feuerbach who illuminated how religion was and is often guilty of shaping a god to suit its own purposes. Gunton's premise is that apart from a proper balance between the one and the many we are left with either a Parmenidian monism (too strong an emphasis upon the one) or a Heraclitian flux (too strong an emphasis upon the many).⁵² In the balance between the one and the many the two must be held together to do justice to the real matrix of being. To deny either the one or the many, or to subsume either as a subordinate or projection of the other, is to collapse the paradox of the unity of particulars.

3.1. Nikolas Berdyaev

Nikolas Berdyaev, a Russian Christian philosopher in the early part of this century, offered a philosophy which attempted to hold together a concern for the one God with the existential emphasis upon the particular human person. Although he did not want to deny the notion of 'being' as the protological basis of the particular he did want to affirm that the person was free to transcend that givenness.

Man has been accepted as the slave of being, which determines him entirely. He is not free in relation to being. His very freedom is born of being. Ontology can be an enslavement of man. The fundamental problem is the problem of the relation between being and freedom...One must choose between two philosophies, the philosophy which recognises the supremacy of being over freedom and the philosophy which recognises the supremacy of freedom over being...the philosophy of the primacy of being is a philosophy of impersonalism; a system of ontology which acknowledges the absolute supremacy of being is a system of determinism.⁵³

Berdyaev is making a clear distinction between philosophy which begins with the question of ontology and philosophy which begins with the question of freedom. As such, he is distinguishing himself from the Russian idealist tradition which sought to explain the unity of the whole by beginning with the one and moving to the many. He is clearly siding with the existentialists who

⁵² Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many*, p.27.

⁵³ Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p.75-76.

wanted to move beyond the boundaries imposed by the principles of an abstract metaphysical approach to reality to establish the freedom of the particular.⁵⁴

Berdyaev is opposed to a social ordering which is a structural or hierarchical and exterior framework which determines the particular entity. The tendency towards imposing a social ordering is identified by Berdyaev as the *objectivisation* of the world in which a projected structure is seen to be more real or ontological than the particulars who make it up.

To be a part of any kind of whole, even if it be in revolt against that whole means to be exteriorised already. Only in a world of objectivisation, that is to say a world of alienation, impersonality and determinism, does that relation of part to the whole exist which is disclosed in individuals.⁵⁵

This opposition would appear to be a direct response to the Russian idealist proposal of a hierarchical ordering of the material world which was grounded in the relation to the one God. Yet it would seem that his reaction is more directly opposed to the Marxist tendency to emphasise the supremacy of society over against the individual. When he says that individualism is simply the reversal of collectivism⁵⁶ he means that in both instances there is a tendency to define oneself and others in an abstract 'objective' structure. He rightly notes that either position is relative to the whole and therefore not truly free. Berdyaev suggested that 'oppressive' forms of social ordering were abstract and unreal, they were nothing more than the product or projection of the choices of 'individual' people. The tendency to define oneself either in relation to or in opposition to the surrounding world is to objectivise the world and indeed oneself. Berdyaev uses the word 'individual' to denote an entity which locates its being or identity primarily in relation to the whole.

Berdyaev found himself in a paradoxical situation. With the existentialists, he rejected the use of abstract metaphysics to support a social structure or ordering. He recognised that a strong identification of a transcendent God with structures or ordering would fail to allow freedom to the particular. Yet, he did not want to reject the Christian God, but to identify God with the particular and not the social structure. Thus, he attempted to do away with the transcendent metaphysical notions of God or 'being' without doing away with the notion of God altogether. God is no longer identified with an abstract metaphysical notion

54 'Freedom, unconditional and uncompromising freedom has been the fountainhead and prime mover of all my thinking.' Nichols quotes Berdyaev in *Theology in the Russian Diaspora*, p.143.

55 Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p.135.

56 Ibid p.135.

of universal order but with the immanent interior and personal encounter. Berdyaev suggests that the individual is faced with a basic existential choice between living in objective structures or transcending objectivism through an encounter with God and others.

Man is a being who surmounts and transcends himself. The realisation of personality in man is this continuous transcending of self. Man desires to go out from the closed circle of subjectivity and this movement always takes place in two different and even opposite directions. Emergence from subjectivity proceeds by way of objectivisation. This is the way which leads out into society with its forms of universal obligation, it is the way of science with its laws of universal obligation. On this path there takes place the alienation of human nature, its ejection into the object world: personality does not find itself. The other path is emergence from subjectivity through the process of transcendence. This is a passing over into the trans-subjective and not to the objective. This path lies in the depths of existence, on this path there takes place the existential meeting with God, with other people, with the interior existence of the world. It is the path not of objective communication but of existential communion.⁵⁷

The freedom for existential encounter with God and with others becomes the basis for truly personal existence. The freedom of the particular is not to be denied by an emphasis upon 'being', whether this 'being' is seen as either the protological static essence of Descartes or the teleological unity of the one in Hegel and the Russian idealists.

Berdyaev is not alone in his reaction against hierarchies or social ordering. It is commonplace to perceive any notion of ordering as anti-personalist and destructive to the integrity of the particular entity. The modern turn to the particular has reflected a concern with any notion of ordering as a basis for individual identity. However, while Berdyaev's approach clearly identifies the problem with some aspects of social relations his notion of authentic relations is seemingly left without significant or definable content. The denial of any notion of ordering grounded in a concern for the particular in the end denies the constitutive role that the social environment plays in the life of the individual.

Berdyaev's strong reaction against any notion of ordering which stands outside of or even alongside of the individual makes it difficult to see how he can truly do justice to the real structure of our world. In order to affirm freedom to the particulars Berdyaev has denied the concrete reality of the matrix of this world. He has collapsed the problem of the one and the many into an emphasis in which particularity is not threatened by an objective unity. Instead the unity or the whole is nothing more than the interior or spiritual unity of communion which

⁵⁷ Ibid p.29.

arises from the unity of the many with the one God. Yet, in abstracting the relation of the particular to the one God, and to other particulars, as an unity of interiority, Berdyaev has denied the necessary symbiosis between the universal order and the unity of the many.⁵⁸ Berdyaev has not offered a conception of relations which accounts for the material and objective nature of human relatedness, he has instead posited an interior 'personal' relation as the basis of identity.⁵⁹ Not only does this Gnostic approach fail to account for the goodness of God's good creation it also fails to account for the primary engagement with the matrix within which we find ourselves.

It must always be remembered that if we are related to other persons, it is through the medium of our bodies. Without that emphasis, there is bound to be an individualistic conception of the person, because our embodiedness becomes a barrier between one person and another.⁶⁰

Where the idealists held together the notion of identity and otherness with relation Berdyaev's approach tends to posit a relationality which lacks any grounding in the material world. Even though he is concerned to maintain the idea that the existential encounter with God and others is true relation, his mystical notion of relations lacks the content and credibility of the Russian idealists' concern to see a unity that accounted for the material world. Berdyaev's definition of the freedom of authentic relations in contrast to the ordering of inauthentic relations requires a dualism which demeans human situatedness.⁶¹

3.2. Situated in a Matrix of Relations

In modern philosophy and psychology there is a recovery of the notion of unity which reflects this traditional focus on the inter-relatedness of people with each other and with the modern understanding of ecology which acknowledges the interdependence of all living beings with the world. Modern philosophers of language would argue that the turn inward to the subjective realm is not only a denial of the objective material realm but a denial of the constitutive element of language in the person.

58 'Until modern times and indeed during some of its phases, social order was nearly always understood to be rooted in some way in an insight into what we can call metaphysical order, the order of being as a whole. It is this that Descartes and his successors have destroyed, and with it the symbiosis of social and universal order.' Gunton *The One the Three and the Many*, p.15.

59 Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p.35.

60 Gunton, *The Promise*, p. 140.

61 Of course one might respond that to define authentic relations is to objectivise them. But in fact that response would indicate that one is remaining within the paradox of the objective/subjective divide at the same moment that one is denying the validity of the divide. For to speak of relations in objective terms does not in fact reduce those relations to circumscribable realities.

But it is the case of the self that the language which can never be made fully explicit is part of, internal to, or constitutive of the 'object' studied. To study persons is to study beings who only exist in, or are partly constituted by, a certain language.⁶²

Heidegger, who recognised something of the importance of language in the dynamic matrix of existence, presents a radically different response to the excesses of essentialism than do most existentialists. It is the dynamic relational matrix of existence, including language which makes up Being which is the locus of all existence. Heidegger noted that radical subjectivity implied and indeed required radical objectivity in order to make any sense at all. Perceiving language as the real matrix within which particulars exist provides an alternative view of human relatedness which breaks through the inherent dualism of the traditional objective/subjective divide. It does not deny the objective and subjective elements of human relatedness, yet it places them as elements within the matrix of the one and the many rather than utilising a model of autonomy as the basis of being.

3.3. Two Forms of Relations

Berdyaev's approach distinguishes between two types of relations or relatedness; the first is the social relations of ordering which are based upon an objectivising of the material realm. The second is the trans-subjective relations which move beyond the normal objective/subjective divide of social objectivism. In this distinction the priority for Berdyaev is put upon the trans-subjective relations in which the individual does not find themselves as part of a greater whole nor define themselves in opposition to the whole. Instead the 'existential' meeting with God and other people is the grounds of true personal existence. The dividing line is placed between relations which are prior to the individual e.g. those which locate the individual as part of the ordering or structuring of society and those relations which are free, determined only by the choice of the individual. Relations are no longer perceived as an essentialist correspondence to the one nor as the idealist placing within the matrix of the whole; relations, like identity, become a function of the individual's choice.⁶³ Where the hegelians incorporated both otherness and relation in the question of ontology the existentialists located identity in the individual's choice for otherness; true

⁶² Taylor, *Sources of the Self*, p.35.

⁶³ Of course whether one defines oneself in opposition to or in correspondence with another the role of relation is still central to one's self definition. We will discuss the problem with the notion of absolute freedom of choice in the paragraphs which follow.

relations are those which are freely chosen. While within the existentialist notion of relations there is emphasis placed upon the importance and even necessity of the other there is a clear emphasis upon relations as the prerogative of the individual. The libertarian notion of freedom, which was expressed by many existentialists, is widely accepted and the notion of relationships as the 'free' prerogative of the individual remains a popular and fiercely guarded principle in western society. In many modern attitudes to relations any ordered or hierarchical structures which appear to be exterior determinatives or sources to the individual's identity are labelled as objectionable and perceived to be problematic to true or authentic existence. This solipsist notion of relations continues to profoundly affect modern values even though it cannot make sense of the fact that relations only take place within a matrix which inevitably remains in some way outside the individual.

Surely part of the difficulty is that the problem in relating to others is not simply the tendency to objectivise them but is the very fact that they confront us as another. The premise that the dichotomy between the objective and subjective can be transcended, does not infer that we must abandon all objective language. To perceive the problem as inherently bound up with the material world of objects is to deny the essential need for otherness in relation. This is not to deny that the human tendency to objectivise is not a problem and in this respect Berdyaev's ideas are helpful. But, to identify the tendency to objectivise as a problem is different from identifying the objectivity of another as a problem. What would seem to lie at the root of the problem is the perception that we as human beings first 'are' and then 'relate'.

4.1. Martin Buber

As we continue to explore the issue of persons and relations we need to turn briefly to the thought of Martin Buber, who is recognised as one of the earliest and clearest progenitors of a notion of constitutive relations.⁶⁴ Buber seeks to do away with abstract metaphysics by emphasising the dynamic and immanent engagement of the one God with human persons. He acknowledges a desire to understand God's relation to the world as parallel to and correlated with inter-human relations; 'my most essential concern [was] the close connection of the relation to God with the relation to one's fellow-man'.⁶⁵ Buber posits the need of

64 Heidegger's dynamic flux was also an attempt to suggest that being was intrinsically dynamic rather than static.

65 Martin Buber, *I and Thou* 2nd ed. (New York: Scribner and co. 1958), p.123-24.

a 'personal' other, God, as the locus or source of I/Thou relations. God cannot be seen as either an abstract notion of being nor as an Idea but must be seen as a person.⁶⁶ His point in this context is that God cannot simply be an object or substance which might be grasped but must be one who encounters us and meets us in a mutuality of relation. God who is the absolute person is a relational being. Where personalists recognised the need for the person to 'be-in-relation' Buber has gone one step further to posit that relations are intrinsic to being;⁶⁷ the absolute person is a person whose being is relational.⁶⁸ Identifying the absolute person as a relational being he seeks to hold together the notion of particularity and relation as two aspects to being.

Like Berdyaev, Buber is concerned to address inadequate forms of human relations and to emphasise that social relations or the structured relations of society are, in themselves, not an adequate basis for personhood.⁶⁹ Buber does not, however, follow Berdyaev by suggesting that there are two *distinct* forms of relation which exist apart from each other as though social relations happen on the level of nature and communion happens in an interior encounter. Although he does differentiate between I/Thou and I/It relations it is not meant to suggest two distinct realms of relating. Rather, the challenge for every human being is to begin with the matrix in which they exist (and not to deny it as Berdyaev would suggest) and 'transmute society into community'.⁷⁰ By holding together person and relation as two aspects of God and therefore two aspects of being, Buber is able to uphold a notion of particularity which is not based upon a denial of the constitutive relations of our social structure.⁷¹ Therefore, unlike Berdyaev, and

66 'The description of God as a Person is indispensable for everyone who like myself means by 'God' not a principle (although mystics like Eckhart sometimes identify him with 'Being') and like myself means by 'God' not an idea (although philosophers like Plato at times could hold that he was this): but who rather means by 'God', as I do, him who- whatever else he may be- enters into a direct relation with us men in creative, revealing and redeeming acts, and thus makes it possible for us to enter into a direct relation with him.' Buber, *I and Thou*, p.135.

67 Borowitz *Autonomous Self and the Commanding Community*, p. 37.

68 Buber's notion of the absolute person who is yet a relational being is an attempt to hold together the notion of person and relation as intrinsically important to being.

69 This might resonate with a distinction Alan Torrance makes when he speaks of the difference between methexis and koinonia; the former suggests a unity which overturns particularity while the latter speaks of a communion which does not deny the particulars who constitute it. A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion*. p. 256.

70 Borowitz, *Autonomous Self and the Commanding Community*, p.46

71 Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many*, p.37, offers a comment on this 'By relationality I do not mean what is sometimes taught, that things can be known only in so far as they are related to us, but rather the realistic belief that particulars, of whatever kind can be understood only in terms of their relatedness to each other and the whole.'

other existentialists, Buber does not allow for the monadic autonomy which would allow us to choose relations of communion independently of the matrix within which we find ourselves.⁷² Buber's concept of relations is far more nuanced than that of Berdyaev in so far as it allows for human situatedness without seeing that situatedness as a threat to particularity.

Buber is clearly concerned to avoid any dualist notion that true relation only happens in an interior realm or a spiritual encounter with God. He is opposed to the dualism which is so often a part of religion and seeks to establish that we do indeed relate as physical beings. Pamela Vermes discusses the distinction between Buber's I/It and I/Thou relations in terms of the words 'encounter' and 'relation'. Where encounter in some models, is defined as the starting point for the development of relation with another person or entity Buber identifies encounter as a moment within the wider scope of relations. The encounter or 'presence-with' another is something which does not happen simply at the moment of first contact with someone or something else but is when one encounters the other as a *you* rather than an *it*. Thus encounter is a vital moment in true relation in so far as it is engaging with another for whom that other truly is, rather than simply seeing the other as 'something'. This emphasis upon the I/you encounter as a 'presence-with' is not to suggest that it is the only real or authentic moment of relationship within the greater framework of relation as I/it. By situating the true 'presence-with' another within the whole framework of relation to another Buber has taken an important step forward in suggesting that the conscious encounter with another as a you is not to be sought as the realm of true existence. The I/it relation is not to be seen as a negative or demeaning notion of relation but as the grounds within which true I/you relations might take place. Therefore there is not a Gnostic sense in which the I/it relation should be overturned in favour of the I/you relation, rather, the I/you relation arises out of the context of the I/it relation.

4.2. Concerns

Buber's thesis remains profoundly influential today. Nonetheless there remain two concerns which have import for our thesis. The first is that in spite of Buber's concern to balance the two forms of relation we are still left with the indication that the I/you moment is the determining and therefore the authentic moment in relation. As a result traces of dualism remain in which the inner

⁷² '{Buber} knows of no utterly discrete Cartesian ego but only a self which is always engaged with another.' Borowitz *Autonomous Self and the Commanding Community*, p.45.

relation is determinative of the outer self. This is for three interdependent reasons: first because he notes that the relation to God is always an I/you and never an I/it relation, because God can never be objectified;⁷³ secondly, because the whole thrust of his argument is that I/you encounter is the *missing* element which leaves relationships inauthentic; and thirdly, when he notes that the I/you relation is 'beyond' space and time; 'The world of it is set in the context of space and time. The world of Thou is not set in the context of either of these.'⁷⁴ These points taken together reveal something of the concern which lies behind Buber's philosophy of relations with which he seeks to overturn the tendency to objectivise others. Buber, although he does not discount the objective element in relationships, wishes to counter the failure to relate to others in I/you or 'presence- with' encounters. The result of this emphasis upon the I/you encounter as the important or redeeming facet of our relationships, means that in spite of his concern not to end up in a dualism of spiritual/ material realms the direction of his focus is upon the spiritual or conscious encounter as the realm of real existence. Responding to the issue of objectification and allowing his thought to be shaped by that, there remains the sense that the pinnacle of relating is one which transcends space and time, that is not circumscribed by our physical constitution.⁷⁵ So although he appears to place significance upon the I/it element to relations, the thrust of his thought is to value our 'conscious' encounter above the physical engagement with another.

The second concern we have with Buber's thesis is to ask to what degree his notion of person and relations is too strongly shaped as a *response* to inadequate forms of human relations. Not that there is anything wrong with seeking to redress inadequate forms of relation; rather we would want to affirm that our doctrine of God must not be shaped by human need. Declaring that God must be understood at least to some degree as a person is a bridge for Buber to establish that it is God's relationality which becomes the matrix of human relationality. 'The Thou sets me free from the world in order to bind me up in solidarity of connection to it'.⁷⁶ As such Buber has recognised that the one God must be the basis of both unity and particularity if there is to be a context for human

⁷³ Buber, *I and Thou*, p. 129.

⁷⁴ Buber, *I and Thou*, p.100.

⁷⁵ Too much stress on our spiritual natures- where 'spiritual' tends to mean inward rather than 'in relation to God the Holy Spirit', however carefully that inwardness is qualified,...will lose sight of the fact that we are related to one another through the medium of our bodies. Gunton, *The Promise*, p.126.

⁷⁶ Buber, *I and Thou*, p.93.

particularity. Yet, Buber's relational model fails to maintain any distinction between the being of God and his establishment of the relational matrix of the world.

For Buber, on the other hand, the inter-human is as it were transparent to the eternal Thou. 'The thou which goes from man to man is the same as the Thou which descends to us from the divine and rises up from us to the divine.' I do not think it is misleading to paraphrase this statement by saying that the question of God is for Buber not separate from the realisation of human community.⁷⁷

We see the same concerns in some modern theologians who are concerned to emphasise the immanence of God in order to deal with the rampant individualism of our societal structure.⁷⁸ For example, Moltmann's notion of perichoresis leaves us with a notion of relations which suggest that the same 'stuff' which constitutes God's being in relation also constitutes human being in relation and in fact the whole world's being in relation. The danger of this panentheist approach is that God becomes the relational matrix of the world, the distinction between Spirit and spirit is lost. The tendency in some relational ontologies is that God is used to address the need for a relational matrix to human social structure and to propose a comprehensive notion of relation which overturns substantialist notions of God's engagement with the world.

Conclusion

The existentialist turn to the particular has brought a whole new approach to the question of the person. Nonetheless, in the end we are still left with the question of how the particular is to be situated within the wider scope of the material world if we are to avoid sliding into a mystical or Gnostic dualism. Which raises the question of relations, how an 'individual' is located in relation to the other individuals and in relation to God or even transcendent values. It is clear that the essentialist notion of relation, as shared substance, cannot allow freedom to the particular, yet neither can the teleological and immanent relation of the Hegelian idealist. Relation cannot be prior to the individual if the individual is to have any freedom at all, yet, neither can relation be wholly the prerogative of the individual if other particulars are to be allowed freedom. The issue of how to allow 'equal' significance to the many particulars remains, whether we begin with the particular or the general. Doing away with an understanding of unity or of some form of transcendentals has not solved the problem of particularity or otherness. Furthermore, the notion or belief in a personal God is no more

⁷⁷ R.G. Smith, *Martin Buber* (London: The Carey Kingsgate Press Ltd. 1966), p. 33.

⁷⁸ See the discussion on Catherine LaCugna, Chapter One section I C.

threatening to personal particularity than existentialist schemes which begin with the particular. What these arguments have served to do is to establish that any understanding of the one God, if it is to avoid static determinism or teleological monism, must hold together a God who is both transcendent and immanent. We have returned to the question which the Cappadocians were faced with as they attempted to understand how the Christian God could be immanently involved with the world without that denying his integrity. Although today, in light of the turn to the particular, the primary question facing us is how can we understand a God who allows freedom for the particular.

Chapter Four: Vladimir Lossky on Person and Nature

Introduction

Vladimir Lossky has been a central figure in Orthodox theology this century.¹ *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, his major work, continues to influence theological thought. The concern for the integrity and irreducibility of the human person is central to his theology. His argument that Christian theology is personalist does not mean that he is simply using philosophical categories in a theological guise.² Working with the frameworks of both existentialist and idealist thought, attempting to deal with the concerns they raise, his clear intent is to remain on a theological path. He seeks to develop an understanding of the integrity and irreducibility of the human person from the Orthodox theological tradition using the distinction between person and nature. In fact the Chalcedonian language of person and nature is central to his effort and is the basis for his definition of the human person. In making this connection he allows that the full implications of personhood suggested by the patristic definition of God's personhood have not been imputed to the human person.³ However, the thrust of his effort is to suggest that the notion of the divine person should be applied to the human person to define their possibility, if not their actuality.

Lossky is recognised as one of the primary voices defending the Orthodox understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. With his concern to develop a theological anthropology from the context of Trinitarian theology he provides a good dialogue partner for John Zizioulas who has sought to clarify the notions of person and relation. Lossky was clearly a man of his generation and his people. His thinking is distinctly shaped by his engagement with a diverse grouping of important traditions and influences. Our desire in this chapter is to identify some of the key influences upon his concept of the person, particularly the Orthodox theological tradition and modern philosophy, in order that we might understand the context and

¹ A.M. Allchin, Vladimir Lossky, 'The Witness of an Orthodox Theologian' *Theology* 72, 1969, p.204.

² *I&L* p.112. See also *Dictionary of Christian theology* (London: SCM, 1969) s.v. 'Personalism' by James Richmond. 'Personalism is, broadly speaking, a philosophical standpoint which takes as its starting point human personality, or which finds in such personality the main key to central metaphysical problems. Many personalities have posited a personal God as our key to understanding the ultimate nature of the world.'

³ *I&L* p. 112.

direction of his theological anthropology. While working with his person/nature framework we will situate this discussion within the discussion of relations begun in the last chapter.

1.1. Influence of West on East

The obvious starting point in an exploration of these 'sources of influence' must be the Russian theological and philosophical tradition. Although it may seem reasonable to assume that the Russian Orthodox Church has remained isolated from the tradition of western philosophy and theology, this would be inaccurate. Florovsky and Schmemmann point out that Russian theology has been influenced for a very long time by the precepts and concepts of the west.⁴ For those thinkers who were a part of the Russian Diaspora there is the additional impact of direct engagement with western thinkers.⁵ Their work inevitably carries traces of western ideas and may at times be derived directly from western thinking; yet, they remain true to their own tradition in ways which are not always immediately apparent. This mixture of influences is further confused by the fact that many Russian thinkers view the heart or core of the tradition as unaffected or pure. Thus the call to return to the roots of the tradition implies an ability to separate out the influence of western thinking.⁶ Lossky for example, claimed that the heart of Russian theology had remained unaffected by philosophy.⁷ Unfortunately the premise of a pure core to theology can lead to the naive acceptance of ideas or concepts simply because they are identified as a part of the tradition. The close relation between the Russian Orthodox Church and

⁴ 'The West was theologising while the East was mute, or even worse was repeating western lessons without reflection' Alexander Schmemmann, *The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy*. (Harvill Press; London, 1963) p. 286. See also Alexander Schmemmann, 'Russian Theology 1920-1972 An Introductory Survey' *SVTQ* 16:4 1972 p.172-195. See also Florovsky *Aspects of Church History* Vol. 4 of *Collected Works* (Nordlund Pub. Co.; Massachusetts, 1975), p.199.

⁵ Rowan Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology' in *The Modern Theologians* 2nd ed. David Ford (Blackwell; Oxford, 1997), p. 506, discusses the same issue.

⁶ Frederick Copleston, *Russian Religious Philosophy* (Search Press; London, 1988), p.149, speaking of this tendency says 'When Kireevsky and Khomyakov asserted the need for a religiously oriented philosophy which would be free from the deplorable influence of western rationalism and would remain true to the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy, were they not manifesting a belief that truth, the important and saving truth at any rate, was to be found in the Holy Mother Russia?'

⁷ '[T]he theology of the church, constantly soteriological in its emphasis has never entered into alliance with philosophy in any attempt at a doctrinal synthesis.' *MT* p.104 cf. *I&L* p.96 See also R.D Williams 'The Theology of Personhood, A Study of the Thought of Christos Yannaras', *Sobornost* 6:6 Winter 1972, p.415.

the political power base of the country is an important factor in the idea that Russian theology and Russian thought as a whole is unique in reflecting the character and 'nature' of the Russian people. The image of Mother Russia, with its underlying idealist and communitarian influences, has both developed with and formed Russian thought in the past centuries. These influences have led to two powerfully shaping forces in Lossky's thought. On the one hand he is concerned to emphasise personal responsibility and the integrity of the individual in the face of determinative or collective forces of the Orthodox Church;⁸ on the other hand, he appeals to the authority of the Orthodox tradition to legitimise his approach. In looking at Lossky's work one must carefully uncover the roots of his ideas and recognise that they may not be as pure as he asserts.⁹

1.2. Person/ Nature

Scholars of Lossky's work agree that a distinction between 'person' and 'nature' is a central tenet of his work, it runs throughout his writings as a primary gathering theme.¹⁰ Both the relation of a person to their nature, or to the universal human nature, as well as their freedom from that nature are the framework for his thinking.¹¹ While he wants to maintain a clear distinction between the person and their nature he also wants to establish that there is an indissoluble unity of person and nature as well. Alar Lats suggests that the relation of the person to their nature is more primary to Lossky than is the relation of one person to another person.¹² This is not to say that relations between persons are not important to Lossky, but that the primary issue or foundation of truly 'personal' existence includes the relation of the person to their nature or *the* nature. This approach reflects Lossky's concern or even preoccupation with the relation of the general to the

8 This too was undoubtedly a reaction against the monism of Russian idealism. Solovyev suggested that man must let himself be pulled by the forces that would bind him to the 'all' from which all meaning and truth flow. Robert Sleisinski, 'The Spiritual Foundations of Society According to S.L.Frank', *SVTQ* 39;2 1995. p.164.

9 The passionate nature of Lossky's approach no doubt colours his work. See A. De Halleux, 'Personnalisme ou Essentialisme Trinitaire chez les Pères Cappadociens?', *Revue Théologique de Louvain* 17, 1986, p.265. And A.M. Allchin, 'Vladimir Lossky the Witness of an Orthodox Theologian', *Theology* 72, 1969 pp.203-209.

10 Rowan Williams 'Eastern Orthodox Theology' in *The Modern Theologians* P. 505 and Alar Lats, Unpublished PhD thesis 1996. p.268

11 *MIT* p.120-121 and *OT* p.42

12 Lats Unpublished PhD thesis 1996 p. 265

particular which concerned Russian philosophy in the 19th century.¹³ Like Berdyaev, Lossky attempts to move beyond the discussion of Russian idealism by maintaining the integrity of the many particulars in the face of the idealist tendency to collapse the many into the one.

A central theme in Russian thought in the 19th century was the relation of the universal to the particular. The Russian idealists' concept of total unity was dynamic in contrast to the essentialists' emphasis upon a protological unity of being. However, as we noted in the last chapter, their approach failed to allow for the particular subject in its own right, which meant that the unity of the many in relation to the one became just as determinative for the many as the essentialists' protological concept of being. Lossky and other thinkers, like Berdyaev, were concerned with the monist tendency in this idealism, especially in its failure to allow freedom and particularity to individuals. They attempted to address this problem by reversing the approach, beginning with the particular and locating the general within the particular. While this reversal certainly altered the focus of the debate it did not necessarily change the basic parameters within which Russian thought was operating. In other words they remained within the framework of the discussion which was concerned with relating the general to the particular.

Lossky utilised the person/nature distinction to elaborate a turn to the particular subject. The idealists had identified the unity of the many as a teleological anticipation grounded in a union with the absolute subject. Lossky steps back from this teleological perspective and suggests that the unity of the many is protological rather than teleological. At first this might seem to be a return to the schemes of the essentialists with their emphasis upon the static essence or 'being' which constitutes the many, yet it is not; rather, Lossky uses it to allow that there are in fact two aspects to the human being: the first is their nature, which is both the constitutive ground of their being as well as their protological unity and identification with the rest of humanity, and the second is their person, which is their free and transcendent self definition in relation to the one who is God.¹⁴ In order to allow that these

13 'Russian religious philosophy attempted to discover a point of equilibrium between individualism and collectivism, a kind of personalism, in fact, which resolves the tension between the particular and the general by seeing the general in the particular' Rowan Williams Unpublished PhD Thesis 1972.

14 'The person is always unique...It is only to be seized through a personal relationship, in a reciprocity analogous to that of the hypostases of the Trinity, in an unfolding which goes beyond the opaque banality of the world of individuals.' *OT* p.43.

two aspects might be held together in the human person without 'confusion or loss of distinctness' he upholds the idea that the person exists as both person and nature, or exists by including two aspects, which are an organic or physical relatedness to the matrix of humanity and the freedom to transcend that 'givenness' in relation to God.¹⁵ Protological unity is the relatedness to all humanity or relatedness to being; it is not the relation to God. Using the doctrine of creation out of nothing, Lossky suggests that the relation to God is not to be confused with the unity of being. He discounts the notion that God's relation to the world is a determined relation, regardless of whether that relation is seen in protological or teleological terms. God is in fact, beyond 'being', beyond ontology.¹⁶ His thesis overturns traditional discussions of ontology which operated from the assumption that God's being is true being and as such the source of all human being.

In Lossky's desire to break free of determined notions of being, he is clearly in line with the existentialist rejection of traditional ontologies. Yet at the same moment, he maintains the notion that relation to God is essential for true personal existence. Thus he has separated out the question of the 'essential' or protological unity of the many from the issue of free existential relation to God. In other words, Lossky balanced the concerns raised in the traditional ontological discussions, to see the relation to God or the one as primary to human identity, with the modern concern to uphold freedom to the particular. The person is able to transcend the material realm in a spiritual encounter with the one God. This is not intended to be a denial of the material realm for the person continues to live out of and incorporate their nature; the nature does not limit the person but provides the grounds of their constitution. Lossky's unique approach attempted to deal with the complex balance between freedom and being by positing a paradoxical unity of person and nature within the human being.

Lossky is very clear in establishing that the idea of the person remains beyond conceptualisation: 'The mystery of a human person, which makes it absolutely unique and irreplaceable, cannot be grasped in a rational concept and defined in words.'¹⁷ This sense of the mystery of the concept of

15 'The relationship [to God] is unique for every being. It is made effective and real by means of the will which orders the entire nature towards God, in whom man must find the fullness of his being.' *MT* p. 127.

16 *OT*, p.16 We will discuss this 'de-ontologising' approach of Lossky later in this chapter.

17 *I&L*, p.107.

personhood is central to his theological anthropology, maintaining above all that the idea of person can never be encapsulated.¹⁸ Where the irreducible complex of body, soul and spirit is the first aspect of the person¹⁹ the second is its freedom to transcend all definitions. In other words, the true essence of the person is not contained within the nature but is able to extend infinitely beyond the constraints of the nature -- almost as though the nature is simply a starting point from which the person might endlessly extend themselves.²⁰ This argument sounds like an existentialist concept of transcendence and certainly reflects their idea of *ecstasis*.²¹ Lossky himself notes that he would use the heideggarian word *ecstasis* if it were not already connected with Heidegger's existentialism.²² This does raise the question of whether or not he is simply expounding existentialist understandings cloaked in theological language.²³

1.3. Freedom to Choose

One of the primary concerns in the arguments of existentialists had been to return to the concrete particular being instead of trying to find the essence which is a portion of or lies behind the concrete existent. Sartre's famous dictum "existence precedes essence " inspired the belief that particularity is derived from a person making choices which gives them an identity in self definition. The emphasis upon choice locates 'being' or the ontic content in the freedom of the individual rather than in some given quality or substance. Authentic existence becomes differentiation from one's givenness and from other existent beings. The existentialists have reversed the equation of the essentialists by linking ontology with particularity. Bringing the two issues of ontology and particularity together the existentialists certainly transform the dilemma yet it is not clear that they have challenged the central issues.

18 OT, p.42.

19 MT p.116, 128.

20 "'la personne", says Lossky, est une sortie du soi-même!' Rowan Williams, 'The Via Negativa and the Foundation of Theology: An Introduction to the Thought of Vladimir Lossky.' In *New Studies in Theology* Vol.1 ed. S. Sykes, D. Holmes (London: Dudworth, 1980). p.106

21 Charles Lock, in a book review of *Being as Communion*, SVTQ Vol. 30:1. 1986 p.94, suggests that for Lossky, 'ecstasis is a "reduction of being" to simplicity, a dissolution of the multiplicity in the One. For Lossky "ecstasy" is Plotinus's word not Maximus' s.'

22 I&L p.120.

23 Lossky is able to develop his emphasis upon personal encounter in the knowledge of God in a ways which at times seems consciously and deliberately to echo philosophists like Sartre. Rowan Williams, 'The Via Negativa' p.111.

In many ways Lossky seems to have come to the same sticking point as the existentialists in which there is a concern not to reduce the person to one aspect or element, while desiring to establish some basis for the uniqueness of the person. Furthermore he is concerned to maintain the freedom of choice in order to establish the responsibility of each person.²⁴ In his call for human beings to take responsibility for themselves he is picking up a central theme in existentialist thought. The emphasis for Lossky, like the existentialists, is placed upon the freedom of the person to 'create' their own identity; particularity is to a degree rooted in what the person does with their given nature.²⁵

It can be difficult to grasp exactly how Lossky understands the issue of human freedom to choose. While he acknowledges the problems with an emphasis upon freedom of choice he continues to maintain that it is a central aspect of personal identity.²⁶ Lossky turns the existentialist tendency towards individualism by saying that freedom is recognised in a transcendence which does not deny the other, dividing up nature, but finds identity through uniting human nature. For an existentialist all human beings become particular beings through the choice to find identity through distinguishing themselves in a qualitative way from other persons. In contrast to Sartre or Heidegger, Lossky changes the arena of choice -- identity is not found in this world alone but in choosing to relate to God. '[The] command addressed to human freedom is not coercion. As a personal being man can accept or reject God's will.' ²⁷

The apparent advantage of this position is that it allows Lossky to uphold a notion of self constitution without thereby denying the integral rootedness of the person within the matrix of creation. Thus while the person locates their

24 Lossky identifies sin with using determinist notions to refuse to take responsibility for one's actions. 'Adam is here the first determinist. Man is not free, he lets it be understood; creation, therefore God has led him to evil'. *OT* p.82.

25 *OT* p.72.

26 'According to Saint Maximus, this freedom of choice is already a flaw, a limitation of true freedom: perfect nature has no need of choice, for it knows what is good in a natural way. its freedom is based on this knowledge. Our freedom of will reveals the imperfection of human nature...It no longer knows how to choose, and too often yields to the impulses of nature which has become the slave of sin. In this way, what was made in us in God's image is drawn down into the abyss, although it still retains its freedom of choice and its ability to return to God.' *OT* p 129. Here Lossky appears to accept the problem with the emphasis upon choice only to turn around and posit free choice as an integral element to the person.

27 *OT* p. 128.

particularity in relation to God in a transcendence of the material realm, this does not imply a denial of the material realm but in fact allows the space by which the material realm might be incorporated and redeemed within the person. The person moves out beyond their givenness or 'nature' not so that they might find a spiritual existence but so that they might live as true persons who are both spiritual and material. The human drive towards individualism is a perversion of God's intention for human particularity which is not to be found in a dividing up this world and staking a claim on one aspect of this world as one's own but by accepting and incorporating this unity within oneself.

1.4. Enduring Particularity

Lossky's concept of the person is thus rooted in a understanding of the endurance of each particular. One problem with existentialist arguments is a failure to give enduring particularity to the person leading to the 'being unto death' of Heidegger or the 'pessimism' of Sartre. While, perhaps giving 'ontological' content to the particular temporal existent as a product of their own choice, they cannot give enduring content to it. The essentialist's desire to give human beings an eternal element remains unresolved in the existentialist's schematic.

For Lossky, the hope for enduring content to the particular is rooted in the human person being made in the image of the divine persons. As we noted in chapter one the danger with using image language is that it readily lends itself to an essentialist interpretation. However, Lossky's emphasis upon *creatio ex nihilo* means that the created human being has no 'natural' connection with the uncreated. How is this disjunction between the created and the uncreated bridged? Lossky posits the image as something dynamic or personal rather than substantial.²⁸ Here again the person/nature concept is central to his description of human imaging of God. Man made in the image of God describes human nature as a whole- united in the same way as God's nature is one.²⁹ Yet, image is not located in 'nature' as the substantial and

28 In fact, there is almost a sense in which the image is only realised in relation; 'this creation in the image and likeness of God implies the idea of participation in the divine being, of communion with God. That is to say, it presupposes grace. *MT*, p.118.

29 There is no distinction between the man formed at the beginning of the world's creation and him who will come at the end: they bear in themselves the same image of God. Consequently, man made in God's image is nature understood as a whole, reflecting the likeness of God. *OT*, p. 124-25.

constitutive element of human being- rather, it is imaged in the human person who is able to unite nature while transcending it in relation to God. 'What corresponds in us to God's image is not a part of our nature, but the person including nature in itself.'³⁰ Therefore the image does not refer to some aspect or content to the person such as the soul, but, refers to the whole person. It is this personhood which images God and provides the link between created being and uncreated being.³¹ This appears to be a profoundly important move in suggesting that enduring particularity is rooted in relation to God rather than in a substantial element of the individual's constitution. However, the direction of Lossky's analogy means that it is because the human being is a person that they are able to relate to God rather than establishing that a human being is a person because they are in relationship to God.

1.5. The Question of Nature or nature

In order to understand the thrust of Lossky's notion of person/nature we need to spend a few moments clarifying what he means by the word 'nature'. The multiple and confusing meanings for the word nature ensure that there will always be an element of mystery to Lossky's definition of the person. It is unfortunate that his use of the word 'nature' as a cornerstone of his theology leads so easily to misunderstanding. We can immediately disqualify the individualist notion of nature which has shown itself in various guises from behaviourism to materialism to Sartre's notion of nature. In fact the thrust of Lossky's argument is to negate the tendency towards believing that the individual has their own particular nature. His clear emphasis upon the universal aspect of nature directs us towards our three real choices. The first is the idea of a generic form or model which acts as the blueprint for all human persons, the second would be the actual existence of a human nature as the physical or organic unity of all humanity and the third would be an Aristotelian notion of a common nature as the second 'substance' of all human beings. Lossky accepts the notion that there must be some real form or structure to the unity of all humanity. In his anthropological focus he speaks primarily of nature as the raw ingredients which constitute all of humanity. As such nature is not an abstract thing nor an individual possession; rather it is both the basis of all humanity as well as the content of

³⁰ OT, p.127.

³¹ OT, p.72.

each human person. Unfortunately, there is also the sense that this nature is the real substance which lies behind all particular human beings. Some of Lossky's statements seem to reflect the simple application of Aristotelian principles; 'Only one nature exists, common to all men, although it appears to us fragmented by sin, parcelled out among many persons'.³² The problem with any notion of a universal nature including the Aristotelian model, is that it can tend towards nature having a determinative influence on the person, the individual person loses any particularity. That Lossky cannot accept any model which denies particularity is evidenced by his objection to the social determinism of Russian philosophy in the 19th century. Utilising the model of person/nature he is able to say that this nature which is constitutive of each human being is not absolutely determinative of their person.

Because created in the image of God, man is to be seen as a person who is not to be controlled by nature, but who can himself control nature in assimilating it to his divine archetype.³³

Identifying an individual's protological constitution and their integral relatedness to the rest of humanity as their 'nature', all the while maintaining the freedom of the person, Lossky appears to be holding two positions at the same time. Has Lossky, in attempting to address the concerns of both idealists and existentialists fallen into a basic dualism? If he has, then it is a dualism which is overcome by the human person for he is not simply identifying two realms which a human being must choose between. Rather, by ascribing central importance to the person he is suggesting that it is the human person who must hold within themselves these two realms. To explore the coherence of his approach we need to turn first to his use of patristic theological themes.

2.1. A Foundation in Patristic Theology

We noted at the beginning of this chapter that Lossky validates his argument for the unity of the person and nature within a human individual by referring to the Chalcedonian model of Christ. This is in contrast to the secular existentialists who root their concepts in their phenomenology. From the Cappadocian discussions on the meaning of *hypostasis* and *ousia* he suggests that we need to deconceptualise the notion of the human individual

³² MT, p. 120, OT, p.125.

³³ MT, p.120.

in the same way in which the Cappadocians did for the notion of divine persons. Lossky makes an important distinction in keeping with these Fathers by noting that they were trying to break through the substantialist interpretations of the Trinity. Significantly, he is attempting to use the interpretation of revelation to confront the essentialist or idealist tradition which itself often claims to be rooted in revelation. He is strongly opposed to a substantialist ontology which would see the person as a secondary or temporal expression of the one substance or the one true being.

Indeed in the doctrinal conditions prevalent in the West all properly theocentric speculations run the risk of considering the nature before the persons and becoming a mysticism of the divine abyss, as in the Gotthart of Meister Eckhart: of becoming impersonal apophaticism of the divine nothingness prior to the Trinity. Thus by a paradoxical circuit we return through Christianity to the mysticism of the neo-platonists.³⁴

While his broad grouping of all western theology might seem a bit condescending there is truth in his suggestion that much of western theology tends towards locating the ontic content of the divine persons in some inner aspect of their nature.³⁵

Lossky's discussions of the Cappadocians does seem to reflect something of their struggle to bypass philosophical constructs which tended to encapsulate or limit God's being. The obvious danger is that in applying their language of divine persons to human persons he might confuse their theological constructs. To legitimate this application of the notion of divine persons to human persons he looks to Jesus Christ as the God/man, one person with two natures who as the 'image' of God in human form allows us to transfer this notion.

The Chalcedonian two-nature Christology is the basis of Lossky's move to connect the language of image from the three divine persons of the Trinity through Christ to humanity. Christ, who united both God's nature and human nature in himself, becomes the paradigm for every human being.³⁶

34 *MT*, p.65.

35 'If certain critics have wanted to see in St. Basil's Trinitarian doctrine a distinction between hypostasis and ousia which should correspond to the Aristotelian distinction between *πρῶτη* and *δεύτερα οὐσία*, this is because they have not been able to distinguish either the point of arrival from the point of departure or the theological construct, which is beyond concepts, from its conceptual scaffolding.' *I&L*, p.114.

36 '[The] refusal to admit two distinct personal beings in Christ means at the same time that one must also distinguish in human beings the person or hypostasis from the nature or individual substance.' *I&L*, p. 118.

For in his unity of two natures Christ shows the priority or freedom of the person with reference to nature. Furthermore, in his microcosmic inclusivism of all human nature, Christ restores human nature to its absolute unity as the image of God's nature as absolute unity.³⁷ The existence of the three persons of the godhead becomes the principle for human persons in the unity of humanity. The divine persons are each fully God in themselves yet also fully God in unity. This way of *being* becomes the paradigm to which each human is called, yet instead of uniting God's nature within ourselves we are each called to unite all of human nature within ourselves. Lossky is careful to note that this unity is a mystery and one must be careful not to take this idea too far. In fact, he is simply saying that the mystery of how three persons can be one God is the basis for believing that all human beings can be united in human nature yet distinct as persons

The fact that Christ incorporated both God's nature and human nature in a single person is evidence that it is not nature which determines the person but the person who incorporates nature. Without question Christology must be foundational to any theological anthropology; the question is how it is applied or used. There are several problems with Lossky's use of Christology in the development of his anthropology. In order to unpack and qualify what Lossky is saying in his person/nature distinction we need to examine his application of patristic concepts in support of his thesis. We will look briefly at the legitimacy of his use of the Chalcedonian distinction between person and nature before turning to explore how he has interpreted the Cappadocians' ideas.

2.2. Coherence with Patristic Theology

It seems as though Lossky is attempting to use the Chalcedonian language in a very technical way which stretches the meaning of the specific words beyond the breaking point. Although we would not agree with those who suggest that the language of person and nature is archaic and should be abandoned, we would allow that it must be used with caution.³⁸ The

³⁷ 'For God's image in man attains its perfection only when human nature becomes like God's nature, when it begins fully to participate in uncreated goodness.' *OT*, p.125.

³⁸ 'The Chalcedon Definition has been subjected to many criticisms by modern theologians, who complain that the terms it employs are no longer usable. It is true that the terms which are rendered 'nature' and 'person' do not coincide in meaning with their modern English equivalents, but it is doubtful if the Fathers at Chalcedon thought the terms they used were

primary problem, in Lossky's approach, is that he has taken a statement which was meant to affirm the mystery of the person of Christ, as both human and divine, and he has made it the cornerstone of his anthropology. The council's affirmation of one person and two natures in Christ was not intended as a positive *formula*. Rather, it was an instance of what Bonhoeffer calls 'critical Christology'. 'The results of critical Christology are of a negative kind, because they determine boundaries and establish the rules for what may *not* be said about Christ.'³⁹

We noted earlier the problem of the multiple meanings of the word nature and it appears as though part of the problem in the fifth century was rooted in different interpretations of what the word nature actually meant.⁴⁰ Therefore to use the term nature, as described by the council in 451 ad, in a pivotal way in theological constructs is to deny the limits of its definition. If the issue of how Christ can be both God and man is reduced to a question of how he can contain two natures at once, we, in effect, have avoided the more important issue which informed the debates of the third and fourth century: which is, how can Christ be united with both the created world and uncreated God at the same time? Therefore the question of two natures in one person is not a question about the person of Christ alone, but a question of the matrix of his inter relatedness.

Lossky's use of the person/nature formula is not solely founded upon the Chalcedonian statement. Rather, he goes back to the Cappadocian understanding of the divine persons. When one reads Lossky together with the Cappadocians there is a sense of real coherence between the two. He uses some of the central concepts of the Cappadocians to bring to light the issues they were attempting to express in their time. In spite of his clear desire to remain true to the tradition we see that, once again, his historical scholarship has been shaped by more modern concerns and ideas.⁴¹ With the question of

adequate to express the reality of God in Christ.' *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*; ed. A Richardson. s.v. 'Christology', G. Hendry p.58.

39 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center* Eng. trans. Edwin H. Robertson (San Francisco; HarperSanFrancisco, 1978) p.74.

40 Bonhoeffer referring to Chalcedon says 'It speaks about "natures", but expresses the facts in such a way as to show that the concept of "natures" is quite inappropriate for this use. It works with concepts whose formulations are declared to be heretical except when they are used in contradiction and paradox. It pushes the concept of substance, which lays the basis for the relationship between the natures, to such a point that it becomes meaningless.' Bonhoeffer, *Christ the Center*. p.88.

41 Williams, 'The Via Negativa' p.111, questions Lossky's historical accuracy.

his historical accuracy in mind we now need to turn to consider his interpretation of the Cappadocians.

2.3. Lossky's Application of Cappadocian Thought

The central theme of the Cappadocians, for Lossky, is clearly the comparison of the universal and the particular.⁴² The Cappadocians use this analogy to explain the particularity of the three persons in the Trinity as a unity in diversity in the same way as each human being is a particular being united in the universal human nature. Where they used the analogy of the general to the particular to try to explain the distinction between hypostasis and ousia in the doctrine of the trinity, Lossky makes it the very basis for explaining his theological anthropology using the person/nature distinction. While he is using the same language as the Cappadocians he gives their work a different slant by focusing primarily on the one analogy. Thus in Lossky's model, we find nature being used in a different sense than the Cappadocians intended.

Let us now look in Christian anthropology for the same non-conceptual meaning of the distinction between hypostasis and ousia or physis. (These two notions coincide without being completely identical.)⁴³

In the context of the Cappadocians it must be noted that they used physis of both hypostasis and ousia, so, to align it with one of the two words is in fact confusing their usage of the terms. It appears that Lossky's use of the word nature as a synonym for ousia confuses the thrust of the Cappadocian distinction. In chapters one and two of this thesis we argued that the formula of one ousia and three hypostases was to be understood not as an equation but as two ways of speaking of God. Indeed if we make the formula into an equation or if we neglect to state both the oneness and the threeness of God we are in danger of denying the paradox which is at the centre of Trinitarian theology. Lossky has clearly recognised the need to maintain this paradox; however, when he equates nature or physis with ousia and then continues by speaking of the unity of the person with their nature he has, in effect, reduced the paradox of the three in one to an equation which the two ways of speaking of the one God must be 'added' together.

In actual fact Lossky seems to almost go back behind the Cappadocians to see in hypostasis and ousia the similarity which allowed Athanasius to equate

42 *I&L*, p. 114.

43 *I&L*, p.115.

the two terms. His suggestion that the difference between hypostasis and ousia is non-conceptual, seems to undermine the thrust of the Cappadocians' work, whose concern was to clarify the difference between the words hypostasis and ousia. Although Lossky is wanting to maintain the distinction between the two terms it is a 'mystery' which remains beyond conception. By focusing on physis Lossky has blurred the distinction they were making.

2.4. God's Nature Differs From Human Nature

The truth is that his interchangeable use of nature and ousia is not in keeping with the subtleties of the Cappadocians' argument. In particular he fails to draw attention to the qualifications which the Cappadocians made regarding the word physis. In his Christology he makes the link between human nature and God's nature by suggesting that while the two natures are absolutely different to the point of ensuring the distinction of the created and the uncreated, they are also of the same order.

Men have therefore a common nature, one single nature in many human persons. This distinction of nature and person in man is no less difficult to grasp than the analogous distinction of the one nature and three persons in God.⁴⁴

Basically, Lossky has failed to account for the fact that the unity he is talking about is not the same between humans as it is between the persons of the Godhead. His use of nature as the basis of the unity in both cases reflects an understanding which sees the two natures being of the same order. As we noted in chapter one the Cappadocians were careful to distinguish the unity of human nature from the unity of God's nature. When they compared God's nature to human nature it was to maintain the distinction between the created and the uncreated, it was not a statement with regard to the content of the two natures.

While Lossky is right in seeing that the word nature is important in so far as it does point to the substantial content of God, he confuses the issue because he then turns around and reduces it to one aspect of the persons. His thesis, that it is the person who incorporates nature rather than the nature determining the person, forces us to ask if he is not trying to mask a contradiction in the guise of the mystery of the microcosmic person. Although the unity of the persons is a 'substantial' unity it is not a unity which involves the whole person. He appears to have put the emphasis

⁴⁴ *MIT*, p.121.

upon the particular persons in the same way as the West has put the emphasis upon the one unity.⁴⁵ Thus the criticism of Western theologians, who interpret the Cappadocians from the Latin perspective and see in them a basis for tritheism, does seem to be true of Lossky.

The problem is that Lossky is conflating two questions in his understanding of the word nature. *Nature* does not answer the question- 'how might we describe the God who is three and one?' Rather, it answers the question 'that these three are God and not created beings'. In fact, the ontological question of God's being is answered, albeit in a limited way, by the terms 'ousia' and 'hypostases'. And as we discussed in chapter two, the ousia answers the question 'what' and the hypostases answer the question 'how'. They are not terms denoting two distinct aspects of the being of God.

The discussion of person and nature in the context of patristic theology has raised several questions with regard to the legitimacy of Lossky's claim to have recovered patristic theological themes. One of the arguments of this chapter has been that Lossky is far more influenced by modern philosophical conceptions than he would care to admit. At issue for us is not whether or not one uses modern conceptions but whether or not they serve to elucidate theological truths. Thus at this point we will turn to look more closely at Lossky's understanding of 'relations' in the light of some of the issues we discussed in chapter three.

3.1. Person and Relation

In the past two chapters we have discussed different understandings of relations in seeking to identify or describe different ways in which the individual human person might be understood to 'relate' to other persons and to God. Alar Lats has noted that Lossky's primary concern is to deal with the relation of a person to their nature or to the whole human nature. Lats suggests that this focus has resulted in a failure to deal adequately with the relations between one person and another;

⁴⁵ This is evident in his willingness to quote De Regnon, who we discussed in chapter two as having identified the key difference between the East and the West as simply two approaches to the same issue. *I&L* p.78. See also Greg Havrilak, 'Karl Rahner and the Greek Trinity', *SVTQ* vol. 34;1 1990. And J. Meyendorff, *Byzantium and the rise of Russia*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

It is right to say that the idea of interpersonal relations is not unimportant to Lossky. For him one of the main characteristics of personhood is its openness to the other person. But this openness to the other is not fundamental. It is grounded in the relationship between a person and his nature. A person is related to the other through sharing the nature. A person is free in relation to the nature and does not own it exclusively. The relationship between two persons occurs if the persons are free in relation to their nature.⁴⁶

Lats is clearly right in noting that Lossky's emphasis is upon dealing with the primary relation of a person to their nature, however, this primary relation is not to demean or dismiss the notion of interpersonal relations, of the relations of the persons which go beyond the matrix of the relations of nature. What is confusing at this point is that, for Lossky, the relation of a person to their nature is actually a form of relation from one human being to another. Nonetheless because it is a relation at the level of nature it might be said that it is not actually an interpersonal relation but person/nature relation.

Lossky deals first with the relation of a person to their nature, yet, this primary relation remains dependent upon and no more important than his concern for the person's existential encounter with God. 'The source and end of apophatic theology is therefore a fully conscious (though non-intellectual) relation of personal confrontation between man and God in love'.⁴⁷ The vertical spiritual encounter is seen to be very much in keeping with Berdyaev's notion of free existential relation. While Christ has transformed human nature, thus allowing a healthy person/nature relation, it is through the spiritual relation with God that the individual human being truly becomes a whole person.

[P]ersonal relation with God, a perfectly unique relationship for every human being. This relationship is made real by means of the will which directs the whole nature to God, in whom man must find all the fullness of his being.⁴⁸

These two forms of relation, the person/nature relation and the existential encounter with God, are equally important in Lossky's thesis of the call and integrity of the human being. Furthermore, they are the grounds by which true interpersonal human relations might take place. While the person/nature relation deals with the human person's integrated unity in the whole of humanity on the level of nature, the intent is that the person to person relations should occur with the same freedom between human persons as they do between a human person and God.

⁴⁶ Lats, Unpublished PhD. thesis 1996, p. 258

⁴⁷ Williams, Unpublished PhD thesis. p.186 See *MT* 208, 229, 231.

⁴⁸ *OT* p.131.

Lossky is concerned to establish that 'authentic' interpersonal relations are the hope or the telos of true humanity. This is evident in his discussion of the difference between the terms 'person' and 'individual', where person refers to the freedom for the person to value, rather than defining themselves in distinction from other persons.⁴⁹ The realm of true existence is a world of personal relations; the person, who is irreducible to nature,

is only to be seized through a personal relationship, in a reciprocity analogous to that of the hypostases of the Trinity, in an unfolding which goes beyond the opaque banality of the world of individuals. For the approach to personhood is penetration into a personal universe, at once assumed and open-ended: that of the highest artistic creations.⁵⁰

Given the importance that Lossky appears to be placing upon interpersonal relations it seems strange that Lats should accuse him of devaluing them. We need to explore in more depth exactly how Lossky perceives or develops the relational aspect of the person.

3.2. The Place of Relationships

Lossky approaches relationships in a very different light from classic existential positions where relations are reduced to the functional or causal interactions of an indifferent society.⁵¹ Certainly no existentialist would deny that community or society has influence or impact upon the individual, yet they have tended to see this in a negative light, as something which needs to be overcome. Lossky is not the only one who has tried to alter the individualistic tendency of the existential emphasis upon the other as a barrier to personal freedom. The reaction against the individualism of Sartre or Nietzsche has led people like Berdyaev or Buber to posit a communitarian or relational aspect to the focus on the concrete existent. Generally this has led to the recognition that a person only exists in the context of their relationships with others. 'Personal existence supposes a relation to the other; one person exists "to" or "towards" the other.'⁵² Freedom is not found in moving beyond that relational matrix but in shaping it in a particular way.

⁴⁹ *MIT* p. 121-22.

⁵⁰ *OT* p.43.

⁵¹ Heidegger's understanding of relations is far more developed than what we are referring to here as 'classic' existentialist notions.

⁵² *I&L* p.106.

Perhaps the best known example of establishing the constitutive importance of relationships is Martin Buber's I/Thou relations contrasted with I/it relations.

The person becomes conscious of himself sharing in being, as co-existing and thus as being. Individuality becomes conscious of itself as being such and such and nothing else. The person says 'I am', the individual says, 'I am such and such'.⁵³

Lossky, like Buber, wants to reverse the individualistic trend of the existentialists but he has chosen a different path. He is in fact more in keeping with the personalism of Berdyaev.

Berdyaev was concerned to maintain the importance of relationships in human existence. However, rather than attempting to describe the place of the individual within the matrix of society he began by questioning what true unity might look like. In distinguishing himself from the Russian idealist concern with 'total unity', he talks of the distinction between society and communion. For him communion involves the free spiritual union of persons and has nothing to do with society or its structures.⁵⁴ His distinction between authentic and inauthentic relations was used to posit a free and existential and 'spiritual' communion as the form of true unity. This approach allowed him to emphasise the importance of unity and even to centre that unity on the one God without denying the place that each human person has within that unity. However, as we have already noted, in order to elaborate this thesis Berdyaev has had to resort to a dualism between material and spiritual realms.⁵⁵

The Gnostic denigration of the material realm has remained a powerful if subliminal force in many philosophical constructs. In essentialist thought the mind/body distinction led directly to a dualist perspective. The attempt to hold the material and immaterial realms together in the human individual failed to give any real significance to the physical body and corresponding to this, failed to give a basis for particularity. Lossky, in keeping with the concern of Russian idealists, takes a strong stand against the dualist

⁵³ Buber, *I and Thou* p.64.

⁵⁴ 'The person, indeed, can never be a part of society, because it can never be a part of anything, because it can only participate in communion' Nikolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society* (Glasgow: University Press, 1938) p.182.

⁵⁵ Berdyaev, *Slavery and Freedom*, p.31.

understanding of the west. We need to look to Lossky's understanding of relations to see if he has managed to avoid dualism.

3.3. Lossky on Microcosmic Unity

Lossky suggestion of a 'penetration into a personal universe' sounds similar to Berdyaev's notion of communion.⁵⁶ Lossky, however, is not willing to overlook the need for unity in the material realm and is not suggesting that a person should deny the structures of society. A person does not locate their particularity through trying to divide up human nature.

To put it briefly, let us say that the person can be fully personal only in so far as he has nothing that he seeks to possess for himself, to the exclusion of others, i.e., when he has a common nature with others.⁵⁷

The idea of a common or shared nature would seem to allow for the situation of the person within the wider matrix of existence. If Lossky had developed this theme it could have proven fruitful. However, Lossky's priority is not to lose the basis for the particular person. This leads him to place unity within the person, rather than placing the person within unity.

But in the measure in which he is a person in the true theological sense of the word, a human being is not limited by his individual nature. He is not only a part of the whole, but potentially includes the whole, having in himself the whole of the earthly cosmos, of which he is the hypostasis.⁵⁸

Using Maximus' notion of the microcosmos, Lossky suggests that humanity is in a unique position to bring unity to the world. The goal for the human person is not to define themselves in contrast to another or others, but through unifying all nature -- in the same way as Christ united human nature -- to go beyond all division.

instead of becoming "disindividualised" to become "cosmic" and to merge thus in a divine impersonal, his absolute correspondence of person with a personal God allows him to "personalise" the world.⁵⁹

In fact, Lossky's singular emphasis upon the human person changes Maximus' whole approach. Maximus was concerned to express how God related to the world through human persons who are able to function as mediators in uniting the different elements which make up the world.⁶⁰ It is

56 OT, p.43.

57 I&L, p.106.

58 I&L, p.107.

59 OT, p.71.

60 Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd ed. (Illinois: Open Court Pub. 1995), p.151.

because human beings are themselves made up of the different elements, because they are microcosms, that they are able to function as mediators. In this mediation the differences are not lost in the unity, they maintain their integrity. The problem with Lossky's approach arises when he comes to describe how the unity of the cosmos is brought about. It is here that we see his concern to reverse the idealist's notions of the relation of the general to the particular by beginning with the particular.

His relationship with the universe finds itself somehow inverted when compared with the conception of antiquity...man no longer saves himself through the universe, but the universe is saved through man. For man is the hypostasis of the whole cosmos which participates in his nature.⁶¹

The question of the general and the particular is no longer an issue of how man finds himself within the greater whole. Rather the unity of the cosmos only occurs 'in' the human person. Lossky's primary emphasis upon the person appears to deny the 'situatedness' of the person within the larger whole. Where Maximus identifies the human person, the microcosm, as the mediator between God and the World, Lossky appears to emphasise the human person as an 'incorporater'. The whole of creation is taken up into the person. 'Man had only to give himself to Him in complete abandonment of love, and thus return to Him the whole universe gathered together in his own being'.⁶² Upon closer inspection it seems that Lossky reverses the ideas of microcosm and mediator. For Maximus it is man's position as a microcosm which means that he is able to be a mediator,⁶³ where for Lossky, the human person fulfils their calling to be a microcosm when their mediation brings all nature together within themselves. In Lossky's conception the emphasis is upon the human person's ability to unite the cosmos in themselves; this would appear to be in contrast to Maximus' understanding of the person as a bridge. With Lossky's concern to maintain the irreducibility of the particular in reaction to the monism of Russian idealism, the unity and integrity of the human person becomes his controlling agenda.

61 OT, p. 70-71.

62 MT, p.110.

63 'His microcosmic character points towards a task of mediation which is the aim of his life, while his divine call to act as mediator presupposes his microcosmic differentiation.' Thunberg speaks of Maximus in *Microcosm and Mediator*, p. 350.

3.4. Transcendence

Earlier in the chapter in outlining Lossky's position we noted that together with the existentialists he emphasises the importance of transcendence as the basis of freedom for the particular. The person is not determined by their protological unity of nature or essence, but is able to transcend nature.

The creature, who is both 'physical' and hypostatic' at the same time, is called to realise his unity of nature as well as his true personal diversity by going in grace beyond the individual limits which divide nature and tend to reduce persons to the level of the closed being of particular substances.⁶⁴

Lossky does not simply utilise the existentialists' notion, but argues that this transcendence does not mean, or should not mean a denial of the other, or a denial of the material realm. Rather, the person as a microcosm realises the unity of the material realm, of nature in themselves. Although we have already called into question Lossky's use of the concept of the microcosm we would argue that if he had emphasised the person as a mediator rather than as an inclusive particular, his notion may have been more fruitful. Lossky has sought to address the idealist concern to overcome material/ spiritual dualism alongside of an emphasis upon the particular. We would however question the coherence of his notion of transcendence. A notion of transcendence which suggests that a person is not simply determined by their protological givenness is quite different from a notion of transcendence which suggests that a person may 'move' beyond' the material realm into the spiritual realm.⁶⁵

Although Lossky uses the notion of microcosm to suggest that the person does not deny their nature or givenness, the very fact that they are able to move beyond that givenness into a free spiritual relation suggests a radical ability to 'disengage' from the material realm.⁶⁶ A disengagement which appears to be far too close to the solipsism of Nietzsche. If we are to do justice to the human being's situation within the larger matrix of creation then any

⁶⁴ *I&L*, p.122.

⁶⁵ The distinction between the material and spiritual realms, as though the two realms existed as separate spheres, involves a confusion over the meaning of creatio-ex-nihilo and the understanding of God's transcendence and immanence. This issues have been discussed in more length in chapter one of this thesis.

⁶⁶ The difficulty with Lossky's understanding of the existential encounter with God is that it suggests a 'private' relationship between the believer and God. This in turn causes us to ask with Robert Jenson, 'can faith, interpreted as an event exclusively between God and each soul separately, be plausibly presented also as the base of humans' true community with each other?' Quoted by Gunton, *The Promise*, p. 133.

notion of transcendence should not imply, as Lossky's notion does, an ability to disengage from that situation. Inevitably this perspective implies a distinction between the spiritual and material realms for an interior unity cannot account for the unity of the material realm.

The internalising of unity is reflected in a comment upon 'external' relations as the result of sin; 'only in consequence of sin did these two first human persons become two separate natures, two individual beings, having between themselves external relationships.'⁶⁷ At first glance this would seem to indicate that Lossky's notion of the unity of human nature is one which includes interpersonal relations in so far as those relations are not exterior to the person but intrinsic to their 'being'. Which would mean that when Lossky speaks of the unity of human nature he is actually trying to speak of a matrix of interpersonal unity which involves various forms of relatedness. However, the clear distinction between person and nature, his concern to de-ontologise relations and his emphasis upon the microcosmic inclusivism of the person prevents us from perceiving a dynamic interpersonal relatedness as a constitutive aspect of human nature.

Recalling Buber's 'I/Thou' argument we might remember that his concern to avoid a dualism between material and spiritual realms led to positing a notion of relations which was constitutive of persons. At points Lossky seems to be attempting to account for human situatedness through using different forms of relation. However, maintaining the integrity of the particular is clearly the fundamental concern in Lossky's theological constructs. As a result he is careful to maintain that any notion of relations does not deny the freedom of the particular. By positing two distinct forms of relation Lossky seeks to address the need for a unity of nature and the possibility of free existential encounter without denying the priority of the particular; relation to the other or others is always secondary to the integrity of the particular.

The emphasis upon the integrity of the particular which places relations as the prerogative of the particular calls into question Lossky's understanding of humanity as 'made in the image'. We noted earlier in this chapter that Lossky clearly seeks to move away from essentialist notions of image as one aspect or element within the concrete particular. However, given his concern

⁶⁷ OT, 127.

for the particular's integrity and freedom it is difficult to see how he can truly understand 'image' in relational terms; although he clearly wants to move in that direction. The result is that he is left with the same problems as the essentialists in which 'image' is interpreted in term of an *analogia entis*. Although he seeks to avoid the substantialist implications of locating image with one aspect of the human person he is still left with the idea that image is something integral to the particular.

To understand how Lossky deals with the notions of constitutive relations of 'natural unity' and free relations or existential encounter we need to return briefly to a discussion of divine relations which are the basis from which he develops his understanding.

4.1. Relations of Opposition

Western theologians are highly critical of Lossky's understanding of the western term 'relations of opposition'.⁶⁸ Lossky rejects the notion of 'relations of opposition' because it seems to suggest that the ousia or nature of God precedes the particular persons.⁶⁹ In his perspective the western concept is in danger of reducing the persons to relations within the one God.⁷⁰ Lossky is concerned that western scholars are overly schematic at this point and are attempting to see how the relations of origin might be seen to be that which constitutes and defines the persons. He accepts the patristic concept of relations of origin but seeks to differentiate between those relations and the constitution of the persons.

The Orthodox emphasise that, for the Greek Fathers, 'the relations [of origin] only serve to express the hypostatic diversity of the three; they are not the basis of it. It is the absolute diversity of the three hypostases which determines their differing relations to one another, and not vice versa.'⁷¹

Lossky is not opposed to relations but he wants relations to be an attribute of the persons and not the persons to be seen only as relations. 'The relations are not what define the persons- they follow and are constituted by the

68 See Yves Congar *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The River of Life Flows in East and West*, Vol. 3 Trans. David Smith (New York: Seabury 1983) P.75-77. See also Ralph Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit: Spirit--Christology in Trinitarian Perspective*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1994) p.22.

69 *I&L*, p. 77.

70 The relationships, instead of being characteristics of the hypostases are identified with them. As St. Thomas was later to write: 'Persona est relatio', inner relationship of the essence which it diversifies. *MT*, p.57.

71 Quoted by Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* Vol. 3, p. 74.

persons, like inseparable properties'.⁷² In chapter two of this thesis we suggested that the relations of origin are constitutive of the persons without becoming fully determinative of the persons. We would agree with Rahner that; 'It has not been proved that a relationship that is peculiar to a person and a relationship that results in the constitution of a person are necessarily the same'.⁷³ Yet, rather than positing two forms of relation, one which accounts for the unity of the person with nature, and the other allowing for the free existential relations, we would wish to assert that the constitutive relations of the person might be seen to allow for and include the persons' 'freedom' to respond. This might suggest that the relations of origin are part of the complex of relations which may be identified with the persons of the Trinity without becoming the whole constitution of the persons. As we suggested in chapter two, this should be the place in which the notion of ontological relations could be seen to play an important role.⁷⁴ This would allow that the persons both constitute and are constituted by their relations. Unfortunately, this avenue of thought is not explored by Lossky. He is primarily concerned to avoid the approach of western notions which have sought to develop the understanding of the relations of origin in order to shed light on the identity of the three persons.⁷⁵ Thus he is opposed to any language of relations which might be seen to be primarily constitutive of the identity of the three persons.⁷⁶ In fact he suggests that the relations of the divine persons have to do with the unity of nature.⁷⁷ He deals with the problem of unity at its primary level which is the unity of the individual being as a coherent essence, yet he has, in so doing, simply moved the problem of unity to another level. The result is, in his analogy which emphasises the identity of nature with the three persons, he leaves us with

72 Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* Vol. 3, p. 73.

73 Karl Rahner, *Mysterium Salutis* 1, French Trans. Paris 1971 p.33, Quoted by Congar in *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* p.77

74 This will be discussed in chapter five.

75 MT, p.62.

76 I&L p.79. He also maintains that the Son and Spirit do not relate to each other in the economic activity of God- although this appears as a simple polemic stance against the filioque nonetheless, it does reflect that his theology has little room for a relational matrix which engages and sustains the persons.

77 We might note as well that he is happy to use the notion of perichoresis to describe the unity of the two natures in Christ. MT, p.145 and OT, p.99. While this was first suggested by Nazianzen, it in fact becomes problematic in later understandings of the term perichoresis, especially if we are to suggest that the unity of the three persons is akin to the unity of the two natures in Christ.

an idea of functional relations rather than truly dynamic interpenetration. In other words his strong emphasis upon the relation as a part of the persons leaves us with the choice of seeing the three as either related in a functional sense or with a definition of the three persons as truly autonomous.⁷⁸

4.2. Essence/Energies

One might assume that given more time Lossky would have moved on to address the issue of interpersonal relations, for it is clear that he was interested in a Christian faith which was engaged in real life.⁷⁹ Unfortunately there is little to suggest that he had any room for understanding a relational engagement of persons, whether divine or human, which involved any ontological significance. His basic existential reaction against ontology aside, there are elements to his theology which show that he wishes to uphold the irreducible integrity of the individual person as a primary concern.⁸⁰

Earlier in reflecting on Lossky's understanding of personal relations we noted that there was some evidence that he perceived the relation of a human being to God as the foundational form of true encounter. Yet even this relationship is threatened by his understanding of the essence/energies distinction which controls or describes the whole engagement of God with the world and with humanity.

What is the nature of the relationship by which we are able to enter into union with the Holy Trinity? If we were able at any moment to be united to the very essence of God and to participate in it even in the very least degree, we should not at the moment be what we are, we should be God by nature.⁸¹

The immanent engagement of God with the world is through God's energies not through God's essence. This Palamite distinction raises serious questions

⁷⁸ The degree to which Lossky's theology is informed by the modern notion of the person is evident from his suggestion of three centres of consciousness in the Trinity. *I&L*, p.192.

⁷⁹ Allchin, *Vladimir Lossky*, p.204-205.

⁸⁰ Lossky's use of the concept of kenosis would also appear to reflect a concern to guard the integrity of the particular in their engagement with another. 'And the person [of the Son] fulfils himself in the gift of himself: he distinguishes himself from nature, not to avail himself of his natural condition, but to renounce himself totally. *OT*, p 101. Relating kenotically means that the integrity of those who relate and those who are related to remains intact; the self steps back to ensure that the individual maintains its integrity. In this we see a basic unspoken assumption in Lossky's thought; that is, the integrity of the person demands that engagement with the other does not in any way threaten or determine their personal particularity. (Williams in 'The Via Negativa' p.108 has noted that the concept of kenosis is very important to Lossky.)

⁸¹ *MT*, 69-70.

regarding the character of the relation between a human person and God.⁸² For even when Lossky speaks of a fundamental notion of communion it is not simply an interpersonal communion but a communion with the 'energy' of God.

This is the communion with divine energy, inherent in the soul, which is denoted by the term 'particle of divinity'. Thus creation in God's image and likeness implies communion with the divine being, with God.⁸³

Lossky has used the essence/energies distinction as a basis to maintain the integrity of God apart from his engagement with the world while at the same time allowing for God's immanent involvement in the world. In other words the essence/energies distinction parallels the transcendent/immanent distinction which we discussed at the beginning of chapter one. It appears that the former distinction uses more 'substantial' language than the latter; however, the terms used in both distinctions have potential to confuse the nuances which must be maintained through the definitions of God *ad intra* and God *ad extra*. In spite of the tendency towards substantialist language the essence/energies distinction might have some positive functions if, and only if, one is very careful to maintain that there is no 'substantial' distinction between God's involvement in the world and God in himself. In Lossky's concern to maintain the integrity of God and indeed the integrity of humanity in relation to God, he appears to allow that the energies might be understood as 'a thing in itself'.⁸⁴ Of course the paradox of this approach is that in his desire to guard the integrity of God while accounting for the relation to humanity, Lossky has posited two distinct and even *separate* aspects in the being of God. His rejection of a constitutive notion of relations has led him to posit a complex of distinctions in the Godhead. Once again his primary concern to guard the integrity of particulars reveals itself in questionable assertions.

82 The essence/energies distinction is not developed in the writings of the Cappadocian Fathers, in spite of Lossky's claim that it begins there. In Palamas' writings it becomes a highly questionable distinction. 'In the Palamite tradition God remains independent of his own unity with the divinized Christian.' D.Wendbourg, 'From the Cappadocian Fathers to Gregory Palamas: The Defeat of Trinitarian Theology' in *Studia Patristica* Vol. 17, 1 Oxford, 1982 p.195. Quoted by Alar Lats Unpub. PhD thesis.

83 OT p.123. And he says 'We are unable, therefore, to participate in either essence of the hypostases of the Holy Trinity.' *MT*, p.70.

84 Williams echoes this claim. Williams, 'The Via Negativa' p.105.

Conclusion

In spite of the criticisms made in this chapter it must be acknowledged that Lossky's concern to redress the understanding of the person from a theological perspective has much to offer. His desire to maintain the irreducibility of the concrete existent person while attempting to establish a free relational context does offer an alternative to the abstract metaphysics of much western theology. A strong focus on the person clearly underlies Lossky's whole approach, with the result that it provides the link between his theological themes. The fact that he seeks to redefine personalism by returning to a patristic theology of the divine persons seems to be a positive endeavour, in so far as it brings to light the whole issue of the implications of the personalness of the God of the Christian tradition. Furthermore his attempt to redefine particularity from the typical qualitative focus is an important insight. While there is a tendency towards a spiritualisation of the concept of the person it is clear that his desire is not to posit the person as mystical but as a mystery.

The difficulty arises when his concept of the person becomes too comprehensive. His development of the Chalcedonian terms of person and nature is used to establish a direct analogy between human and divine persons rather than emphasising the singular uniqueness of the unity of the created and uncreated in the person of Jesus Christ. Thus the connection between human and divine is rooted primarily in the fact that they are both persons rather than in a redemptive communion. By completing the circle of the analogy from the human particular and universal to the Trinity and then back to the human person, he appears not to have truly used revelation to determine his anthropology but to have simply used Trinitarian thinking to baptise his personalist understanding.

In fact for Lossky, persons function as both the universal and the particular. By noting the tendency of the Russian tradition to negate the particular person we can understand Lossky's overt emphasis on the person which places unity within the particular. Yet it is apparent that his concern to address this imbalance has too strongly shaped his own approach. Where the idealism of the 19th century tried to fit the particular within the universal, Lossky tries to fit the universal within the particular. The result of the person being all inclusive, is that he finds it difficult to allow for dynamic relatedness. The result is that persons themselves actually lose their particularity and tend towards an all inclusive or mystical monism.

Although it is apparent that he has recognised the need for establishing an ontology which includes a dynamism of relations, he was not willing to allow this dynamism to threaten the comprehensive concept of the person.

Lossky's refusal to use a notion of constitutive relations as an integral aspect of the person brings us to consider Zizioulas' thesis. The two theologians share many of the same concerns, including a desire to recover patristic theology and a desire to maintain the integrity of the particular. Nonetheless, the thrust of their arguments is vastly different from start to finish. Turning now to consider Zizioulas' work we will see that his desire to develop a ontological notion of relations brings a completely different perspective to some major theological themes.

Chapter Five: Zizioulas on Person and Relation.

Introduction

The independence of the individual remains one of the most jealously guarded principles of western civilisation. Zizioulas notes 'we accept the other only in so far as he does not threaten our privacy or in so far as he is useful for our individual happiness'¹ Even people who believe that relations are important in the formation of identity would still tend to see them as secondary to the essence of the person. It is almost as though the more one develops a particular identity the more one must withdraw from other relations in order to guard the identity which has been formed.² Relations and identity remain in an uneasy but necessary balance. Zizioulas suggests that particularity is not to be found by erecting barriers to others but is only found when communion or relating to others becomes the very basis of a person's particularity. The thrust of his argument is that persons do not exist and then relate but they exist and relate simultaneously.³ If we reflect back to Sartre's argument we will remember that he grudgingly admitted the importance of relations only to suggest that the individual was constantly caught in the conflict between identity and relations. For Zizioulas there is no conflict between identity and relation for 'communion does not threaten personal particularity; it is constitutive of it'.⁴ A person does not first relate in order to gain an identity for themselves, nor do they relate only out of their identity. In order to flesh out what Zizioulas means by the hypothesis that a person is a 'hypostasis in ecstasis' we will review some of the key ideas he develops in his notion of the person, returning from time to time to the ways in which Lossky has handled some of the same issues. In this process we will seek to clarify what we mean by the term 'relation'.

1.1. Freedom to the Particular

Zizioulas follows something of the same track as Lossky in using the patristic person/nature distinction as foundational to his theological anthropology. In

1 John Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness' *SVTQ*, 38:4, 1994, pp.347- 361.

2 Taylor *Sources of the Self* p.36, speaks of this perspective 'Its as though the dimension of interlocation were of significance only for the genesis of individuality, like the training wheels of nursery school, to be left behind and to play no part in the finalised person.'

3 *BC*, p.51.

4 *BC*, p.49.

spite of this apparent similarity in approach significant differences quickly become apparent. Both Zizioulas and Lossky wish to uphold the importance of freedom to the particular, reflecting a concern with the possibility of 'nature' becoming determinative of the person. Lossky attempts to juggle the freedom of the particular with a concern for the unity of being (unity with the created realm) and the free existential encounter with the one God.

Identifying the Chalcedonian distinction of person and nature as the 'image' of God that is found in human beings, Lossky uses it as a basis to establish the freedom of the human person to transcend their nature, to transcend their protological givenness. Use of this *analogia entis* leads to significant problems with how Lossky understands humanity. Fundamentally it leaves him trying to hold together an existentialist notion of the freedom of the person to transcend their protological givenness with an essentialist notion of the image of God as something intrinsic to the human person.

Zizioulas, however, interprets nature as a far simpler and less comprehensive term. Nature as one aspect of the constitution of the person is not to be confused with the relational matrix or unity of the created realm; which is an integrated 'unity respecting the integrity and diversity (diaphora) of beings.'⁵ Zizioulas adopts a far more comprehensive notion of ontology than Lossky. Being does involve the unity of all but it also involves the unity of the one with the many. The division which Lossky made between a protological unity of nature and a relational unity with God is avoided. As a result, for Zizioulas, the issue of a person's relation to nature does not take on the significance which is held in Lossky's scheme. Zizioulas quickly differentiates himself from classical understandings of 'being' as he establishes that this nature never exists except in hypostasis. The hypostasis is not perceived as the 'nature' or static substance which constitutes the person, but is the dynamic enhypostatisation of the nature. This means that for Zizioulas, the emphasis is taken off nature as the protological determination of a human person.⁶ Nature becomes instead a descriptive and constitutive element of a human person. Zizioulas allows that ontological questions are not located in a question of nature but refer to the hypostasis. Thus where Lossky has continued to accept the essentialist notion of ontology, as located in nature,

5 'Capacity', p.425.

6 '[T]he person, or hypostasis, is not generated by nature or derived from it (it would not be established in freedom and communion, if it were so).' 'Capacity', p.436.

Zizioulas moves to a more dynamic idealist notion of being where he locates ontology in a teleological matrix of relation to the one.

Zizioulas in keeping with Lossky and the concerns of existentialism maintains the importance of freedom for the particulars. However, Zizioulas recognises that the understanding of freedom needs to be addressed. While he continues to maintain the possibility of volitional freedom, he uses Dostoevsky's argument to discount the notion of ontological freedom.⁷ Zizioulas remarks that suicide is the only way to exercise the complete transcendence of a person's constitution and yet, it is the negative denial of existence or being. There is however an alternative to freedom through suicide and that is freedom through love; 'personhood creates for human existence the following dilemma; either freedom as love or freedom as negation.'⁸ The understanding of freedom as for the other rather than from the other, lays bare the emptiness of modern notions of ontological freedom through choice.

One may argue that the possibility of refusing existence implies a choice between two things, thus leading us back into the moral concept of freedom. But, the alternative to existence, although it may appear to imply a choice between two possibilities, is not in fact an alternative with an ontological content (since its 'content' is non-being).⁹

Suicide accomplishes a form of moving beyond the constitutive elements of the world but only through the denial of existence. Love in turn accomplishes this through affirming the individual's existence in an absolute sense by establishing it in relation to another. Love must become the ontological basis 'we must speak here of an ontology of love as replacing the ontology of ousia, i.e. we must attribute to love the role attributed to substance in classical ontology'.¹⁰

Zizioulas' emphasis upon an ontology of love rather than an ontology of substance reveals one, if not the most, significant difference between himself and Lossky. The ontological union between God and humanity and humanity to creation is not a union of essence or substance but of love. Being made in the image of God is not the grounds for positing a shared substance

7 BC, p.43.

8 BC, p.46.

9 'Capacity', p.428.

10 Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person' p.42.

or even a shared capacity between humanity and God.¹¹ Instead, it is only in the love of God that humanity is able to image God. Following Barth in using an *analogia relationis* rather than an *analogia entis* Zizioulas is able to move to a dynamic notion of being. However, he goes further than Barth in acknowledging that an *analogia relationis* is still concerned with the question of being.¹² Being becomes *Being as Communion*, a dynamic relational matrix rather than a static essential notion.

1.2. Hypostasis: the Dynamic Particular

Zizioulas focuses his discussion on the person as hypostasis rather than attempting to identify how a particular person holds together a static protological essence with a dynamic existence. This in turn reflects the Cappadocian discussion of the formula of the three hypostases/one ousia, rather than the Chalcedon person/nature distinction. He thus simplifies some of the confusion arising from a direct correlation of Cappadocian and Chalcedon terminology.

The use of the term 'hypostasis' is central to Zizioulas' work. Zizioulas uses it in his anthropology both in reference to its patristic usage but also in an attempt to use it as a lever in redefining the notion of a person. Hypostasis is used to describe the mode of existence of a particular person. Stasis or being does not exist in itself but only enhypostasised or in hypostasis. There is no human nature apart from the hypostasis and no stage at which a human is anything more or less than a hypostasis, a human being is a hypostasis from the moment of conception.¹³ The emphasis is not upon the essence of a person but their mode of existence. Therefore, in contrast to essentialist approaches the protological makeup of a person is not finally determinative of their being although it is a constitutive element.

11 'I have excluded every possibility of regarding the person as an expression or emanation of the substance or nature of man (or even of God himself as "nature").' *BC*, p.59.

12 See the discussion on Barth's understanding of analogy in A.Torrance, *Persons in Communion*. p.180-83. Torrance in the same vol. p.258 suggests 'It is our view that if Barth's discussion had integrated more effectively the notions of Koinonia and "essence" or "being", this would have opened the door to a conception of the divine economy which involved a richer integration of communion and communication, a participative "worship model" in interaction with his "revelation model" and an exposition of the Triunity of revelation in terms of the mutuality of divine communion.'

13 *BC*, p.50.

Many of the arguments which Zizioulas uses to establish his case are taken from existential thought. Given his clear emphasis, in ontological categories upon the hypostasis as mode of existence rather than stasis as 'being-in-itself' there are good reasons to wonder how 'theological' his approach is. However, at the same time as we might identify existentialist influences, we must also acknowledge that his terminology appears to resonate with the distinction the apostle Paul uses in 1 Corinthians 2:13-3:3 and 14:44-45 regarding a human person existing according to the flesh (σαρκίνοις)¹⁴ or the Spirit. When Paul uses this distinction he is not suggesting that the issue is whether a human individual is living according to the physical side of their nature or the spiritual side of their nature and therefore subliminally assuming that a person is ultimately determined by their nature. Rather, the distinction is whether the human individual is living according to their 'nature' or is living according to the Spirit. At the same time his use of the term ψυχικός or 'natural' which is a clear derivative from ψυχή or soul, suggests that Paul is not talking of a division here between substance and spirit (or nature and person) but between how the human individual as an integral whole is living. The spiritual person 'does not refer to those who are separated from material life by the practice of asceticism, but to those who have received, and have their existence determined by the Spirit of God'.¹⁵ This leaves little room for any notion of a spiritual/material dualism with a Gnostic demeaning or denial of the material realm. It also supports the idea that questions of ontology involve the dynamic existence of a human person and avoids the tendency to perceive being or ontology as a question of substance.

Although Zizioulas does not utilise the same terms as Paul there is a clear connection with how he understands the possibility of the person existing in different modes according to whether they are 'related' solely to 'nature' or are related to the 'Spirit'. Zizioulas places less emphasis upon the connection between sin and the flesh than Paul and it is important to examine why he does this, as we will be doing in the next chapter. Yet for our purposes here, it raises the question of why Zizioulas has not attempted to stick more closely to the language of scripture and tradition in his use of the words biological and

14 Although there is a question whether the word Paul is using is σαρκίνοις meaning 'made of flesh' or σαρκικοῖς meaning 'having the character of flesh' it makes no difference in our argument. See C.K.Barrett *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*. 2nd ed. (London, A&C Black, 1971) p.79.

15 Barrett, *Corinthians*, p.79-80.

ecclesial. This is particularly noteworthy given his concern to respect the tradition of the Church; for example, in his argument that we should claim the terms 'person' and 'cause' for theology in light of their patristic usage.¹⁶

Zizioulas is clearly concerned to ground himself in the patristic theological tradition, yet, he is quite happy to use philosophical concepts and ideas to establish his argument. For example, he uses the presence-in-absence dilemma of Sartre to argue that the human person cannot be defined empirically.¹⁷ Zizioulas notes that the problem of physical existence means that another human being will exist first as a quantitative static being before existing in ecstasis or communion with another. The very fact that the biological hypostasis begins as a physical entity before it relates means that it is existing as an individual rather than as a person. In other words the human being is not existing as a person but as a static or fixed quantity, an individual, which is contrary to the very definition of personhood.¹⁸

Zizioulas' use of Sartre's analogy needs to be questioned; while it apparently illuminates the problem of objectification, it is in danger of simply accepting an existentialist view of the problem from a subjective position. In other words, it seems to assume that the problem of personhood is primarily a problem of consciousness rooted in an objective/subjective divide.¹⁹ This is certainly not Zizioulas' intention although there is this danger inherent in his description. We will explore the problems this raises later in this chapter. First, however, we need to recognise that while Zizioulas is happy to use Sartre's analogy to describe the person's capacity for transcending objective definitions, he is in fact seeking a different notion of transcendence.

1.3. Transcendence/ Ecstasis

In speaking of the freedom of the person to 'go beyond' objective depiction Zizioulas prefers the word ecstasis to the word transcendence. When we use the word 'ecstasis' it is natural that we should look to Heidegger's use of the word. In the twentieth century he certainly stands as a key exponent of the

¹⁶ See chapter two of this thesis.

¹⁷ See chapter three of this thesis.

¹⁸ Zizioulas rejects the definition of person as individuality or consciousness. 'Capacity', p.420.

¹⁹ Zizioulas' argument at times appears to deny his own rejection of any definition of the person on the basis of consciousness. 'A person who has become indifferent to the problem of existence has made a decisive step towards thinghood, and things are incapable of faith.' 'Capacity', p. 422.

term. Zizioulas, identifies the word with Heidegger's use of it, in his paper 'Human Capacity and Human Incapacity'.²⁰ It is interesting to note that several Orthodox theologians use the existential notion of transcendence in their theology. We have explored in the previous chapter how Lossky used the term 'transcendence' in his theological notion of the person. Yannaras, another Orthodox theologian builds his whole theology out of combining Lossky's theology with Heidegger's work, transforming the latter into theological concepts and principles.²¹

The notion of ecstasis, from an existential perspective, points towards a self transcendence where the individual is able to move outside of the necessity of their existence and the limitations inherent in it, in order to become an authentic person. We see this in various images from Nietzsche's 'superman' to Heidegger's 'being unto death'. This idea of the fundamental openness of the human person is an attempt to allow freedom to the person to define themselves. In the article *Human Capacity and Incapacity* Zizioulas uses this concept of transcendence; 'Thus personhood implies the "openness" of being, i.e. a movement towards communion which leads to a transcendence of the boundaries of the 'self' and thus to freedom.'²² Alan Torrance suggests that in some ways Zizioulas has uncritically affirmed the approach of people like Yannaras and Heidegger.²³ While Zizioulas never held that ecstasis was a spiritual transcendence of the material body his emphasis upon ecstasis as a going beyond the limits of nature could lead to a Gnostic understanding of ecstasis.²⁴ Further it appears that while he upholds the idea of a transcendence that would lead to communion, he at times appears to

20 The term ek-stasis in this sense is known today mainly through the philosophy of M. Heidegger. Yet, long before him, this term was used in the mystical writings of the Greek Fathers (Pseudo-Dionysis, Maximus, etc.) in basically the same sense. 'Capacity', p.408.

21 See Rowan Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology', in *The Modern Theologians*, 2nd ed. p.510.

22 'Capacity', p.408.

23 A.Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, p.35 Although he does allow that Zizioulas' notion of transcendence is different than Rahners. p.283.

24 At the same time, and in contrast to the particularity of the individual which is subject to addition and combination, the person in its ekstastic character reveals its being in a catholic, i.e. integral and undivided, way, and thus in its being ecstatic it becomes hypostatic, i.e. the bearer of its nature in its totality. 'Capacity', p 408. It is interesting that at this point Zizioulas is in fact very much in keeping with Lossky's use of ecstasis as both of them have apparently adopted existential ideas.

suggest that ecstasis is fundamentally an 'openness'.²⁵ However, there appears to be a development of clarity in Zizioulas' thought with regard to the notion of ecstasis or transcendence. When we move to *Being as Communion* we find that Zizioulas is careful to differentiate his idea from Heidegger's notion of ecstasis. Where in his earlier work he had identified Heidegger's notion with the history of the usage of the word in the Fathers, he is now careful to note that there are some problems with how Heidegger and Yannaras use it;²⁶ and we might also infer that there are problems with how Lossky used it as well.

In *Human Capacity and Human Incapacity*, we see that Zizioulas' concern to uphold a notion of volitional freedom(not ontological freedom) means that he is walking very close to existentialism where the notion of transcendence is tied up with the presupposition of human freedom to choose. We see this worked out most clearly in Zizioulas' use of the idea of the person as an artist -- capable of creating freely, without limits.²⁷ Zizioulas can appear to uphold a notion of radical freedom even at times when he is attempting to point out the paradox of such a notion: 'for the alternative which freedom poses for man's existence lies between accepting existence as a whole as something of which man freely partakes, or making existence something which man controls himself.'²⁸ The very fact that Zizioulas can suggest that this is a choice which faces the human person appears to imply that he is using a concept of volitional freedom which fails to account for human situatedness. The paradox of a notion of radical freedom has already been identified in chapter three in the discussion of situated freedom. Any attempt to find ultimate freedom must involve a denial of the very matrix which describes our horizons. This means that any attempt to truly move *beyond* the elements and relations which constitute an individual's existence is doomed

25 In the midst of his discussion of the paradox of presence-in-absence he refers to a passage from Pannenberg which more clearly illuminates the paradox he is trying to get at, which is that a person cannot be described as bounded. 'Capacity', p.413.

26 The concept of ekstasis as an ontological category is found in the mystical Greek Fathers (particularly in the so-called Areopagitical writings and in Maximus the Confessor) and also totally independently in the philosophy of M. Heidegger...However, the use of Heidegger in the interpretation of patristic theology runs into fundamental difficulties. *BC*, p.44-45.

27 'Just as God created the world totally as free grace, so the person wants to create its own other. This is what happens with Art; and it is only the Person that can be an artist in the true sense, i.e., a creator that brings about a totally other identity as an act of freedom and communion.' Zizioulas *Communion and Otherness*, p.359.

28 'Capacity', p.431.

to failure. Although Zizioulas clearly rejects a notion of ontological freedom he continues to maintain a high degree of volitional freedom which can lead to some confusion in understanding his thesis.²⁹ In spite of his concern to overturn any solipsist notion of transcendence there remains in his thought a bias towards emphasising the integrity and freedom of the particular. We will address this issue later in this chapter; for the moment we need to look at Zizioulas' concern to identify ecstasis with relations.

For Zizioulas, ecstasis is not seen as a simple going beyond or transcendence of one's nature into unconditional freedom, for any movement 'beyond' the self implies encounter. There is no 'empty' space where a person might escape to.³⁰ Nor is ecstasis to be understood as introspection or an ability to disengage from the world. Unlike Lossky this 'going beyond' is not perceived as a spiritual or inward journey- rather, it is understood as any form of engagement with others that is truly a move outwards.³¹ Zizioulas suggests that ecstasis is fundamentally encounter with another, any move 'outwards' implies encounter.³² Yet, more than this, ecstasis means relation, the individual does not first look outwards and then move outwards in order to encounter another; any movement implies encounter and relation.³³

Ecstasis is not a move beyond the hypostasis but is the natural existence of the hypostasis. Where Lossky's use of ecstasis seems to lead to a spiritual transcendence of the material realm, Zizioulas unites ecstasis and hypostasis directly to suggest that ecstasis is not escape from the person but is the true existence of the hypostasis. There is no conflict between the notions of relation and particularity, true particularity requires ecstasis, requires relation. The hypostasis does not go out of itself in order to relate or commune with others but is only truly a hypostasis as it is in ecstasis, as it is in communion with others. For Zizioulas ecstasis without a hypostasis is mysticism which

²⁹ BC, p.43.

³⁰ In his argument of the need for humanity to transcend the self, it is clear that this is not a going into nothingness; 'Those who accept this paradox as pointing authentically and ontologically to personal experience are not as far as they might think from an implicit assumption of God.' 'Capacity', p.421.

³¹ Zizioulas' is concerned to discount any notion of transcendence through introspection. 'Capacity', p.405.

³² '[E]cstasis is not to be understood as a movement towards the unknown and the infinite; it is a movement of affirmation of the other.' Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, p.359.

³³ In this respect Zizioulas appears to be more in keeping with an Hegelian notion of the matrix of relations which constitute this world.

denies the person's concrete particularity, while hypostasis without ecstasis leads to individual pietism which denies the other.³⁴

2.1. Biological Hypostasis

Zizioulas does not fall into a romantic notion of ecstasis or relations where the problems of this world and especially individualism will all be solved if we simply operate with or adopt a healthy concept of relations. Rather, Zizioulas identifies a problem right in the nexus of how human beings exist. The problem of holding together the hypostasis and ecstasis is the paradox of humanity. The nature of the human being leads to the conflict of these two essential aspects of true personhood. In the description of the *biological hypostasis* Zizioulas makes it very clear that the failure to be truly a hypostasis in ecstasis is the inevitable result of human nature when taken by itself. 'The body tends towards the person but finally leads to the individual.'³⁵ He is intent on making it clear that the human being within itself has no resources with which it may exist as hypostasis and ecstasis at the same time. The primary reason for this, which Zizioulas calls the passion of the biological hypostasis, is the problem of necessity which means 'constitutively the hypostasis is tied to the natural instinct, to an impulse which is 'necessary' and not subject to the control of freedom'.³⁶

In our culture we tend to romanticise love, seeing the possibility of truly transcending one's own needs or givenness in the love of another, and in some ways it is evident that this is indeed a characteristic of the human person. However this ideal falls short, for human love tends to be exclusive and not inclusive whereby for example it is seen as normal for the husband to lay exclusive claim to the love of the wife.³⁷ Thus even in the very act of transcending the limitations of being there are new limitations put in place where the love is not truly free and inclusive but directed, described and exclusive.

Zizioulas tries to develop his understanding of the paradox of human love by elaborating how in the ultimate physical expression of ecstasis it becomes its

³⁴ BC, p.53.

³⁵ BC, p.51.

³⁶ BC, p.50.

³⁷ BC, p.57.

own defeat. He utilises a perspective on sexual relations which is clearly reminiscent of Sartre who

reflects on the inescapable contradictory and frustrating character of the interpersonal and sexual relation. 'I try to escape being object to the other through love. In this context, love is understood as possessive love. It is the desire to assimilate the other to myself. But in order that this may happen, the other has to love me; and to make the other love me, I have to become an object to excite that love...In any case whatever partial satisfaction may be obtained in the sexual act is dispersed by its consummation.' ³⁸

Although Zizioulas' use of this idea, in the text of *Being as Communion*, is somewhat vague it is clear that he does not limit himself to Sartre's explanation of this analogy. He admits that people can accomplish or realise significant acts of communion. He notes how erotic love is indeed a mystery of ecstatic self transcendence; 'erotic love, even when experienced coldly and without emotional involvement, is an astounding mystery of existence concealing in the deepest act of communion a tendency towards an ecstatic transcendence of individuality through creation.'³⁹ Sexual intercourse is paradigmatic of the true transcendence which is possible for the human person. Nonetheless, the breakdown of human relationships which is so evident in our society today does speak clearly of the fact that the promise of 'meaningful' relationships remains a vague unfulfilled hope. Much of what passes for ecstasis in sexual intercourse is a union of physical persons without involving the whole psychosomatic unity. In other words there seems to be a definite element of falling short of true ecstasis in the very act which purports to embody it. More significantly, the illustration of erotic love also reveals the problem that even within this act of creating a new life there are the seeds of death. The biological hypostasis is linked to the cycle of life and death. In the final account even the greatest examples of ecstasis end in death.

2.2. Death

Zizioulas is suggesting that there are two aspects to the death of the individual person. The first is that death means the abrupt and real cessation of existence for the concrete and particular person. It is tragic 'self negation' of its own hypostasis (dissolution and annihilation of the body and of individuality). From the perspective of this world we can only speak of a person as continuing to exist through their work or through the memory of

38 John MacQuarrie, *Existentialism* (London: Hutchinson and Co. 1972), p.86-87.

39 BC, p.50.

their life after they have died.⁴⁰ In some way this is a continuation of their existence but it is not the continuation of the concrete and particular individual. In a sense it does not matter how successful a person may be in transcending the givenness of their being, in the end it is their concrete and individual existence which through death renders them no longer a person. 'this identity can never be fully realised in history as long as nature still dictates its laws to man, particularly in the form of death.'⁴¹ The second aspect of death is that when a person dies they die alone, ultimately their love dies with them, this is why death is so tragic. The love or ecstasis of a person does not continue to exist after the individual has died. Even if a person has managed to live in a way where their existence truly transcends the givenness of their being, in the end their death proves that they are an individual. Zizioulas calls this 'the cession of "time" and "space" to other individual hypostases'.⁴² Thus he notes that death is truly the final expression of the individual's inability to continue to transcend the givenness of their existence.⁴³ Heidegger would see 'authentic' existence as accepting the natural limitation of death without allowing that to determine one's existence negatively. 'For the Christian thinker, on the other hand, it remains the worst enemy of man, the most unacceptable of all things'.⁴⁴

2.3. Enduring Particularity

If we examine human beings simply from the perspective of the created realm we are forced to acknowledge that personhood, at least in the way that Zizioulas has defined it, as an enduring hypostasis in ecstasis, remains an impossibility. Nonetheless, Zizioulas affirms that the hope of true personhood remains a possibility given the engagement of God with the world which he has created. He says 'only theology can treat of the genuine, the authentic person, as absolute ontological freedom must be uncreated'.⁴⁵

40 Which seems to be what Buber is suggesting when he talks of relating to someone who is long since dead. Yet, he lacks a way of identifying how the particularity of the individual is maintained.

41 Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person', p.44.

42 BC p.51.

43 Once again Zizioulas appears to be using an existential idea in Heidegger's thesis of *being unto death*. However, as we have already noted Heidegger's notion remains inadequate for a Christian theology which needs to speak of an enduring particularity.

44 'Capacity', p.422.

45 BC, p.43.

The Church Fathers brought about two significant changes which broke free from the traditional philosophical understandings while giving ontology a basis which offered the hope of holding together relation and particularity in the absolute sense which their patristic definition of person suggested. The two essential changes which they suggested were a) a radical change in cosmology which would free the world and man from ontological necessity and b) an ontological view of man which would unite the person with the being of man, with his permanent and enduring existence, with his genuine and absolute identity.⁴⁶ With these two points Zizioulas challenges most alternative approaches to ontology. Yet, to understand what he means by these points and how he intends to utilise them we need to discuss what he means by the ecclesial hypostasis.

The ecclesial hypostasis realises true existence in a way which the biological hypostasis does not. It does this by allowing a hypostasis or mode of existence which is not controlled by ontological necessity. In order to offer this the 'hypostasis must inevitably be rooted, or constituted, in an ontological reality which does not suffer from createdness'.⁴⁷ The key idea that Zizioulas is working out here is that the ecclesial hypostasis must have a source which allows truly free existence, an existence which is not rooted in necessity but allows the opportunity to transcend the limitations of our givenness. In other words this hypostasis must not be limited and constrained by being rooted in the natural cycle of life and death which are the parameters of the biological nature. This 'source' can only be found in a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* which establishes that there is something 'other' than this world; that God is distinct from his creation. Only by continuing in ecstasis to this 'other' can a person truly hope to transcend the necessity of existence, to break free of the interrelated dependence inherent within a closed system. This requires an ontological change in the mode of existence or hypostasis of the person. This change is found in the basis of a relationship with God. God being uncreated, that is outside the boundaries of necessity posited by our being created, offers the possibility of a source of being, or mode of existence, which is capable of loving in absolute freedom.

⁴⁶ See discussion in *BC*, pp.38-39.

⁴⁷ *BC*, p.54.

[T]he particular is raised to the level of ontological primacy, it emerges as being itself without depending for its identity on qualities borrowed from nature and thus applicable also to other beings, but solely on a relationship which it constitutes as indispensable ontological ingredient.⁴⁸

Relation to God offers the possibility of authentic enduring personhood; a) because he has created the world out of nothing and therefore is not necessarily related to it but relates in true freedom and b) because God exists as true and enduring particular persons. God's absolute freedom is found in his Trinitarian being. If we return to our discussion of the Cappadocian doctrine of the Trinity we will note that God does not first exist and then relate, rather, God in his very nature is ecstasis and hypostasis, three persons in one. The ecstasis of God, his love, is extended to the created realm. Through the mediation of Christ by the Spirit what is valid for God becomes valid for humanity. This new mode of being, the ecclesial hypostasis, must in some way be free from the necessity which has led to the loss of personhood for the biological hypostasis. This hypostasis is realised in an ontological way in Christ who brings humanity into relation with God. 'Christology consequently is the proclamation to man that his nature can be "assumed" and hypostasised in a manner free from the ontological necessity of his biological hypostasis, which, as we have seen, leads to the tragedy of individualism and death.'⁴⁹ Thus in Christ true personhood is realised and made available for humanity.

Baptism is the 'new' birth into the Church which as the body of Christ forms the new community. The 'new' element in this baptism is the reconstitution of the human being in which the communion of relations becomes the very source of the new hypostasis; the network of relations is not exterior to the constitution of the hypostasis but is in fact the actual constitution of the hypostasis. The paradox of particularity and communion (ecstasis) is done away with by making the two elements mutually constitutive rather than opposing concerns. In the person being made new they are a new hypostasis, a new mode of existence. Where in the biological hypostasis the human being first is and then relates, in the ecclesial hypostasis the person is in and through their relations. It becomes possible to realise ecstasis and hypostasis at the same time. With the ecclesial hypostasis being rooted in a God who is

48 Zizioulas, 'On Being a Person' p.41.

49 BC, p.56.

the communion of these three persons, it, the hypostasis, is able to realise ecstasis and hypostasis at the same time.

2.4. Is the Biological Nature Demeaned?

Does this mean that human nature is overturned or obliterated? Staniloae suggests that in Zizioulas' work there is an apparent denigration of the human being as a psychosomatic unity where the physical or biological existence must be denied or put aside in favour of the ecclesial existence.⁵⁰ In fact, there is at times almost a Gnostic sense in which the body is seen as an impediment to the actualisation of true existence. 'The body leads to communion with others but at the same time is the 'mask' of hypocrisy, the fortress of individualism, the vehicle of final separation, death.'⁵¹ Is Zizioulas in fact placing physical existence in a negative light in which it becomes the central obstacle to the true or eternal life which Christ offers to us? Zizioulas is careful to state that 'the two basic components of the biological hypostasis, Eros and the body, should not be destroyed'.⁵² To deny this would in effect deny that there was any connection between the biological nature and the ecclesial hypostasis. Zizioulas is anxious to note that the hypostatic change is not a loss of that which constitutes the biological nature but is rather a change in the mode of existence. The ecclesial hypostasis is constituted by relation to God and by human nature and not simply by the necessity of the biological existence. 'The ascetic character of the ecclesial hypostasis does not come from a denial of the world or of the biological *nature* of existence itself. It implies a denial of the biological *hypostasis*.'⁵³ Zizioulas is careful to note that the denial of the biological hypostasis is not a denial of human nature itself: 'it is superfluous to stress that this does not suffice to bring about the transcendence of the biological hypostasis if nature is not hypostasised simultaneously in the eucharistic community.'⁵⁴ Zizioulas is anxious to assert the importance of seeing the body not as a negative concept as in the Gnostic tradition, but as an integral part of the person.

50 Staniloae criticises Zizoulas in this regard in 'Image and Likeness and Deification in the Human Person', *Communio* 13 1986, p.64-83.

51 BC, p.52.

52 BC, p.53.

53 BC, p. 63 (Italics mine).

54 BC, ft nt p.63.

Zizoulas distinguishes between the biological nature and the biological hypostasis. The biological nature is not wrong in and of itself, it is when the hypostasis lives only in accordance with the nature and not as an ecclesial hypostasis that the limitations of the biological nature become a problem. Yet, even as an ecclesial hypostasis we must be clear that the nature is absolutely necessary and not only necessary but fulfilled in and through relation to God. 'The biological being of man finds through its incorporation into Christ its true spiritual hypostasis.'⁵⁵ The mode of existence of the ecclesial hypostasis does not deny the body or Eros but hypostasises them in an ecclesial way. It is no longer bound to the limitations inherent within the biological nature but is able to redeem the biological nature through incorporating it in the hypostatic movement of ecstasis in the Eucharist.

2.5. Eucharistic Hypostasis

The language of true ecstasis in the ecclesial existence sounds a little idealistic in the face of the history of the Church. This brings us to note that for Zizioulas the ecclesial hypostasis is not in fact something which is realised in a permanent way in this life. The human person is still subject to the death of the biological hypostasis.⁵⁶ The transformation from the hypostasis who lives biologically to one which lives ecclesially is not a once for all metanoia which leaves the ecclesial hypostasis as a totally new being who is no longer subject to the necessity of the biological nature. In fact,

the encounter between the ecclesial and the biological hypostasis creates a paradoxical relationship in human existence. Man appears to exist as that which he will be; the ecclesial identity is linked with eschatology, that is, with the final outcome of his existence.⁵⁷

The biological nature is not a 'condition' which is overturned or replaced by the ecclesial hypostasis; instead there is a sense in which the human person lives both biologically and ecclesially. The ecclesial existence is real in Christ and thus for each person in the Church it is the faith and hope that they 'will indeed become an authentic person'⁵⁸ It is a faith and hope grounded in the

55 Panayiotis Nellas *Deification in Christ: Orthodox Perspectives on the Nature of the Human Person*. Eng. Trans Norman Russell (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), p.124.

56 All this means that the ekstatic movement towards personhood, remains for man an unfulfilled longing for a presence without absence of being as long as there is no way of overcoming the space-time limitations of creaturehood. 'Capacity', p.420.

57 BC, p.59.

58 BC, p.58.

fact that in the resurrection Jesus realises the true person; 'the real hypostasis of Christ was proved to be not the biological one, but the eschatological or Trinitarian one'.⁵⁹ The truth of the person is not in fact something which is realised in the present but is a future reality which through faith and hope becomes an already but not yet dialectic.⁶⁰ This future hope becomes a present reality in a concrete and material way only 'momentarily' in the Eucharist where a person relates in a free and inclusive manner.⁶¹

Thus, Zizioulas posits a third hypostasis which is the *eucharistic* hypostasis. In the Church this eschatological reality of the person is realised only in the Eucharist where 'the Eucharist is first of all an assembly, a community, a network of relations, in which man subsists in a manner which transcends every exclusiveness of a biological or social kind.'⁶² The eucharistic mode of existence is not in this sense a hypostasis which is discontinuous with the ecclesial or biological hypostasis. Instead, it is a mode of existence which accounts for the human being existing in both a biological and ecclesial manner. Legitimately one might say that the eucharistic hypostasis is an ecclesial hypostasis in so far as its ontology is proleptically determined, yet it continues to exist in a way which does not deny the biological nature but transforms it. This hypostasis reflects the character of the person in the Church who is still subject to the necessity of the biological hypostasis yet transcends this necessity in the "assembly and movement which are the two fundamental characteristics of the Eucharist".⁶³ The movement towards the future goal which has been realised in Christ is at the centre of the eucharistic celebration.

3.1. Relations and Free Choice

We have explored Zizioulas' idea of the biological and ecclesial hypostasis, now we will turn to consider more directly the notion of relations. Zizioulas' scheme which reflects something of an idealist approach to ontology

⁵⁹ BC, p.55.

⁶⁰ BC, p.62.

⁶¹ Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue.* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993), p.266, cites Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.298, using the term 'moment' to designate the temporary nature of the ecclesial mode of existence.

⁶² BC, p.60.

⁶³ BC, p.61.

perceives the relations of the one to the many and the relations of the many to each other as constitutive of their being. Rowan Williams notes;

John Zizioulas' work on ecclesiology links Afanasiev's themes (not without some criticism and refinement) to a whole metaphysic of relation, centered on the trinitarian image of being as *essentially* relational: the great philosophical error is to look for isolated ahistorical substances, since the source of all reality is not 'a' substance but a relational system. ⁶⁴

While we must note that the source of all reality for Zizioulas is a person-in-relation rather than a 'relational system', Williams is right to illuminate Zizioulas' concern to establish a 'metaphysic' of relations. Lossky, in contrast, had reacted strongly against any idealising notion of relations. He insisted that relations were 'free' and were not ontological. While relations remain important in his scheme, they are the prerogative of the person rather than being constitutive of the person. In one sense Lossky and Zizioulas are very close in placing a high emphasis upon relations, yet, in the structure of their argument they are very different, even in opposition to each other. Lossky's de-ontologising of relations to ensure the freedom of the person is countered by Zizioulas' ontologising of relations to produce a dynamic and free, rather than a static protological, model of being.

One of the difficulties with existential approaches, and in this case Lossky's, is that they are so conditioned by the emphasis upon free choice that even relations are not perceived as mutually constitutive but rather as secondary to the individual's self identification. Charles Taylor identifies the impact of an underlying solipsism on a notion of relations:

corresponding to the free, disengaged subject is a view of society as made up of and by the consent of free individuals and, corollary to this, the notion of society as made up of bearers of individual rights. This is perhaps one of the most deeply entrenched images of society that modern civilisation has thrown up. It begins with the famous 17th century theories of social contract, but it develops and mutates, and emerges, inter alia, today in a perhaps debased form on the interpersonal level in the contemporary notion of a love 'relationship' between two independent beings.⁶⁵

It is this emphasis upon 'real' relations which lies behind much of the modern notion of relations. The element of free choice is so prominent in this idea of relations that the relations themselves are robbed of any content beyond the fleeting subjective feelings of the individual. The difficulty with the modern demand for freedom is that it attempts to define the integrity of

64 Williams, 'Eastern Orthodox Theology Today', p. 510.

65 Taylor, *Sources of the Self* p.106.

the individual so strongly that the individual is not in any way determined by or conditioned by another except through their own choice.⁶⁶ Rather than providing a basis by which we might explain the complexity of relations, this idea of free existential relations leaves the individual more isolated in their subjective self. This, paradoxically, in the end robs the individual of any particularity. In this light Gunton drawing on the work of McFadyen traces

the link between individualism and social homogeneity to Kantian ethical theory. The logic of this, [McFadyen] argues, generates a suppression of the individual, or more accurately of personal particularity. The weakness -and it is precisely the same weakness that we discerned in the discussion of the one and the many- is to be found in an inadequate conception of relationality, that is, of how we are each distinctive and different by virtue of and not despite the fact that we are related to each other.⁶⁷

If we return briefly to Lossky's thesis we will see that his notion of relations is based more upon a concern to guard autonomy than upon a real understanding of constitutive engagement with another. The desire to guard the integrity of the individual person means that there is no basis by which we might understand constitutive relations. This is especially true with regard to the relation to God. It seems that in Lossky's thesis there is a tendency to impose a notion of free existential encounter as the qualification of 'authentic' relation upon our understanding of how God is engaged with the world. In his reference to the Spirit as the one who is most truly personal because he cannot be objectified we see the inherent bias in Lossky's system which betrays a latent gnosticism.⁶⁸ It implies that interpersonal relations must transcend the barriers of our physicality if they are to be truly whole. We would suggest that the model of free existential encounter is a false model which implicitly forces a dualist understanding upon the world and God's engagement with it.

3.2. Defining the Basis for an Ontology of Relations

The problems of individualism and dualism have acted as fulcrums to the modern focus upon relations and the place of relations in the constitution of persons. The question which must be asked of all models of communion, or relational ontologies, is the degree to which they are driven by a need to

⁶⁶ Lossky' scheme differs from the essentialists in so far as the individual is conditioned by a relationship to the new nature which Christ provides. Yet, beyond this their existence is determined by their choices.

⁶⁷ Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many* p.194.

⁶⁸ *MT*, p.160.

overturn the destructive tendencies of individualism. The danger in this polemic approach to the questions of ontology is the tendency to replace one problematic model with another. The pendulum has swung too far the other way; 'for the fashion in many a work, especially theological work, is to affirm the superiority of relational to substantial thinking, as an altogether alternative way of conceiving of being.'⁶⁹ Positing a relational matrix as the ontological foundation to reality does not eliminate fundamental concerns and issues. When we uphold a notion of relations or communion as ontologically primordial, we can bring a whole raft of different problems into the discussion.

In the paradox between being and freedom there remains the problem of holding together two disparate truths; the truth of the constitution of the particular by forces which lie outside of their power and their self determination in freedom. The paradox of these truths has always and will always plague theology. Unless we choose to resign ourselves to a radical apophaticism of what this relational basis might look like we are forced to examine how the particular is located.

Affirming a relational ontology offers a new approach by which we might hold together these two truths; yet, it does not erase the questions which must be dealt with.

Returning to our discussion of Buber in chapter three, we noted that he suggests human beings are called to overcome the problem of objectivism through accepting the relational foundation to all existence. The problem with modern society for Buber, is not the objectivity of the world but the tendency towards objectivism -- towards living only with I/it relations. Buber's concern is two fold, on the one hand he is seeking to overcome the dualism between the spiritual and the material realm and on the other hand he is seeking to establish the importance of the relational matrix of all existence in contrast to individualist assumptions. By correlating the immanence of God as the foundation of the relational matrix of the world Buber seeks to overcome both individualism and dualism. In his concern to establish the parallels between the relation to God and the relation between human beings Buber tends to suggest that the realisation of personhood is dependent upon the many accepting the dimension of I/you relations.

⁶⁹ Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many* p.194.

[C]onventional thinking is given a second jog by Buber's contention that perfect relation is the fruit and not the source of every other relation. The proposition that love of God is the fount of all other love is replaced by another claiming that love of the world is a precondition of the love of God.⁷¹

In his desire to uphold a notion of authentic relations, as fundamental to the person, Buber posits relations as the substance of being. Zizioulas suggests that the danger in Buber's approach is a foundationalism of relation and seeks to differentiate himself from it. For Zizioulas,

this communion is not a relationship understood for its own sake, an existential structure which supplants 'nature' or 'substance' in its primordial ontological role- something which is reminiscent of the structure of existence found in the thought of Martin Buber.⁷²

The danger of holding a concept of communion as the primordial ontological reality is that it can become a determinative 'substance' in the same way as traditional essentialism sought to locate the essence of a person in one aspect of their nature. If we are to establish a model of dynamic relations as integral to ontology we must establish how relations do not become so comprehensive that the particularity of the many is denied, as it is in idealist models. In the very attempt to define what we mean by a relational ontology we are again forced to understand how the particular is constituted both by the other and by themselves.

3.3. Zizioulas on Relations

Zizioulas' thesis, which has many parallels with Buber's work, remains fundamentally different.⁷³ The relation to God is not realised through the relation to creation, rather, the relation to creation is realised through the relation to God. The *many* of the created realm, in themselves, have no basis by which they might realise authentic relations. For to suggest that there is some inherent capacity in humanity to realise authentic personhood leads immediately to the concept of an *analogia entis* and the problems of an essentialist model of being. Zizioulas describes a distinction between necessary and free relations. In the existence as a biological hypostasis the human being first is and then relates. Therefore the relations they enter into are not free but necessary. This is not a distinction with regard to the quality

71 Pamela Vermes, *Buber on God and the Perfect Man* (California: Scholars Press, 1980) p.213.

72 BC p.17.

73 McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church* p.274, affirms that Zizioulas values Buber's thesis but differentiates himself from it.

of relations but a distinction of the freedom of relations. In the Church there is a new network of relations which are not in any way fixed or exclusive but are open ended and are dynamic in their very nature. For the ecclesial hypostasis, 'new birth from the womb of the Church has made him part of a network of relationships which transcends every exclusiveness.'⁷⁴ These new relations are not tied to natural necessity but are tied to the free communion with God. Zizioulas implies that we cannot allow the other to be truly free to be other, because our very existence depends upon who they are to us. The necessity of our existence means that in the last resort there can be no true freedom in human relations because our relations are based first on need. It is only in relation to God that there is the possibility of true freedom in relation because God is not constituted in relation to us but is truly 'other than' his creation.

God's relation to the world is seen as the basis upon which the created realm is meant to function and through which it is to be completed. The person in relation to God does not deny or turn aside from their relatedness to creation as though in finding their free relatedness they are made complete and may therefore ignore their necessary relatedness.⁷⁵ Yet, Zizioulas does not allow that the relational matrix of this world is the immanent presence of the God for that would deny the freedom which is fundamental to his concerns. God who is transcendent is able to engage immanently with creation without that engagement threatening human or divine freedom. In free relatedness to God, in Christ and through the Spirit, human persons transform and complete their necessary relatedness to creation setting it free to also enjoy its intended end in communion with God. This freedom given by God means that human persons may relate to the world freely rather than out of necessity.

3.4. Creatio-ex-nihilo and God's Relation to the World

Central to Zizioulas is the understanding of how God is related to the world. In suggesting that divine ontological relations are the ground for authentic human relations we need to establish in what way these relations which are constitutive of God's being are also constitutive of

⁷⁴ BC, p.58.

⁷⁵ Human capacity, therefore, does not require a departure from creaturely conditions in order to exist. Communion with God is possible for humanity- and through it for the entire creation- only in and through creaturely existence. 'Capacity', p.439.

human beings and constitutive of 'inter-human' relations. We agree with Zizioulas that *creatio ex nihilo* is a vital doctrine to maintain that God is radically other than the world which he has created; as we noted in chapter four, it allows 'space' for both the world and God's self to avoid collapsing into an idealist scheme.⁷⁶ However, *creatio ex nihilo* should not be used to suggest that God remains disconnected or disengaged from the material world, existing only in a spiritual plane. The deist assumption, that after creation God gives freedom by disengaging from creation, is not what the Fathers were seeking to establish.⁷⁷

Zizioulas notes that the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* can only make sense if it is held with a doctrine of personhood.⁷⁸ God who is Trinity exists as a dynamic communion of three persons. As a result God is free to relate to that which is other without, by that relation, denying the integrity of the three in one. The assumption that lies behind this argument is that God is free to relate to creation with the same fundamental freedom with which God exists in himself.

This ecstatic character of God, the fact that His being is identical with an act of communion, ensures the transcendence of the ontological necessity which His substance would have demanded-if the substance were the primary ontological predicate of God-and replaces this necessity with the free self-affirmation of divine existence.⁷⁹

Zizioulas locates the dynamic relationality of God in the very definition of how God exists *ad intra*. This protects us from a notion that God must relate to the world if he is truly to be himself -- i.e. to be relational -- as for example we see in Buber's notion that 'God needs us'⁸⁰ The significance of the freedom of God is grounded in God's dynamic unity and particularity. Therefore the freedom of God *ad intra* is not a freedom *to* relate but a freedom *in* relation. The description of freedom as a freedom *for the other*

76 See chapter one of this thesis. Alistair McFadyen makes the same point; 'In Christian doctrine, creation begins with a physical letting be and it is this which gives creation the autonomy in which it can now stand over against God as an independent order of being'. *The Call to Personhood* p.21.

77 The divine human relation must be taken as non-constitutive for human being or else reduced to a primal origination determination, but one which did not endure beyond that creative act and which is no longer determinately effective in human existence. The most that is possible here is a form of deism, the affirmation of the existence of God such that it makes no difference McFadyen, *The call to Personhood*. p.27.

78 'Capacity' p.416.

79 BC, p.44.

80 Buber, *I and Thou* p.82

rather than a freedom *from the other* is rooted in the understanding that the fundamental unity of the three persons of the Trinity does not deny their particularity. The distinction of *creatio ex nihilo* does not mean that God is disengaged from creation, nor should it suggest that God is not in relation to creation, but that in the context of his relation to creation God is able to offer and sustain the space for the particularity and otherness of created beings.

3.5. Is Human Finitude the Problem?

Zizioulas has clearly identified the importance of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* in order to maintain freedom for both God and humanity. Nonetheless there are some ways in which he appears to contradict his own position. His identification that human finitude (the biological mode of existence) is 'overcome' in relation to God (the ecclesial mode of existence) would seem to suggest that the freedom God offers to us is the freedom to move beyond the protological relations which constitute us.⁸¹ When Zizioulas makes the distinction between the biological nature and the biological hypostasis he appears to be offering a way in which the human person does not need to deny their situation, their natural constitution. Yet, on a closer look it is apparent that the matrix of our relatedness, our existence as biological hypostases, needs to be overcome. Speaking of the person who is living according to the ecclesial mode of existence and not the biological mode of existence Zizioulas says, '[t]his means that henceforth he can love not because the laws of biology oblige him to do so -- something which inevitably colours the love of one's own relations -- but unconstrained by natural laws.'⁸² Our 'natural' relations do fall far short of the love of God, but if we posit this failure as an *obligation* of biology we are in danger of locating the fallenness of this world in our biological constitution and the matrix of our 'natural' relations.⁸³

81 Zizioulas, 'Capacity' p.420, suggests that 'Personhood prefers to create its presence as absence, rather than be contained, comprehended, described and manipulated through the circumscribability and individualisation which are *inherent* in all creaturehood.' Zizioulas' intention is to posit this individualisation as inherent because humanity is not in relation to God. Yet, it sounds as though he is positing individualisation as an inevitable consequence of our createdness.

82 BC, p. 57.

83 It is Zizioulas' desire to move away from any moral categories which leads him to a position in which the limitations inherent in our createdness become the source of all the problems in this world. '[T]his failure of the survival of the biological hypostasis is not the result of some acquired fault of a moral kind (a transgression), but of the biological act of the perpetuation of the species.' BC p.52

We see the same concern with regard to the issue of theosis. Zizioulas' intention is not to suggest that theosis involves a denial of our 'natural' constitution:

Theosis, as a way of describing this unity in personhood, is, therefore, just the opposite of a divinisation in which human nature ceases to be what it really is. Only if we lose the perspective of personhood and operate with 'nature' as such, such a misunderstanding of theosis can arise.⁸⁴

The implication is that theosis is not to be understood as a denial of our human nature. But, clearly one aspect of our human nature is that it has limits. Do these limits need not be overcome for a human person to be truly personal? We would suggest that in keeping with Zizioulas' own concerns, *ecstasis* should refer to a constitution in relation to others rather than a capacity to transcend our limitations. We would also suggest that an emphasis upon becoming truly human might be more helpful in emphasising that salvation is not about denying our situatedness but reorienting it.

In turning to Zizioulas' understanding of otherness it becomes clear that he has yet to deal fully with the situatedness of human persons. Attempting to overturn the tendency to reject another, because they are different than oneself, he insists that the Christian must be inclusive. The principle of inclusivity means that 'when the other is rejected on account of natural, sexual, racial, social, ethnic, or even moral differences, Orthodox witness is destroyed.'⁸⁵ We would not argue with Zizioulas that Christians are called to accept one another; yet, while an acceptance that makes no distinction on the basis of moral categories may affirm the other, it remains a meaningless affirmation for it cannot serve to establish acceptance of the other *in relation* to oneself. In chapter three, picking up the argument of Charles Taylor, we noted a principle of inclusive homogeneity is far more destructive to human particularity and freedom than traditional notions of transcendent principles given by a transcendent God. Zizioulas' notion of inclusivity appears to resonate with the call to love our neighbour as ourselves, yet, it is in danger of displacing the first commandment, 'to love the lord your God with all your heart'. In Zizioulas' emphasis upon a principle of acceptance which transcends objective differences he is in danger of supporting either a relativism which is ultimately destructive of human freedom and

⁸⁴ 'Capacity' p. 440.

⁸⁵ Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness', p.360.

particularity, or of suggesting a communion of persons which goes beyond our objective world. This latter option would leave Zizioulas close to Berdyaev's notion of a trans-subjective realm which presupposes a dualist framework. The seductive promise of a model of free relations unencumbered by our objective differences remains a popular ideal in our culture. One only has to look at the claim that the internet offers intimate relationships without the problems of objective discrimination to realise the idealist vision of authentic relations remains influential. If we are to develop an understanding of relations which accounts for the situatedness of persons we must establish how we differentiate between limitations which are destructive to particularity and limitations which are not. The freedom God offers to us is not a freedom from relation, or even a freedom to *choose* to relate, but it is a freedom *in* relation.⁸⁶ It is not therefore a freedom which denies human situatedness but one which enables a shaping of that situatedness to mirror or image God's own freedom of particularity in unity.

We must be clear at this point that we are not calling the whole of Zizioulas' argument into question; rather, we are suggesting that there is a need to develop some clarity on the issue of human finitude. It would appear that his use of the language of necessity and finitude in the context of his discussion of the hypostasis does not do justice either to his understanding of the situation of the human person nor to his understanding of freedom as love rather than freedom as choice.

A second point in which Zizioulas seems to betray his own concerns is with his insistence that the freedom of God is based upon the Father and not upon the claim that God is a dynamic unity of three in one. In Zizioulas' concern to emphasise the integrity of the person he can appear to parallel Buber's notion of God as the absolute person.

For this communion is a product of freedom as a result not of the substance of God but of a person, the Father -- observe why this doctrinal detail is so important -- who is Trinity not because the divine *nature* is ecstatic but because the Father as a *person* freely wills this communion.⁸⁷

Of course as we have discussed in chapter two, the issue of the Father as cause is important to maintain that God's being does not take precedence over the particular persons. Nonetheless, emphasising that God is free because of the

⁸⁶ 'Freedom, that is to say, is not an innate possession -- quite the reverse -- but has to be given.' Gunton, *The Promise*, p.122.

⁸⁷ BC, p.44.

person of the Father would seem to confuse the issue and perhaps once again reveal the influence of existentialist concerns on Zizioulas' thesis.

3.6. Personalism?

It is interesting that Alan Torrance reproaches Zizioulas for straying too close to a monadic personalism.⁸⁸ On closer inspection it appears that it is Zizioulas' use of the concept of causality in connection with the person of the Father and not his notion of 'person' which Torrance feels leads to a position of emphasising the priority of the person over the concept of relation. The scope of this criticism can be confusing if we forget that it is held hand in hand with Torrance's affirmation of Zizioulas' notion of person-in-relation. Torrance suggests that Zizioulas contradicts his own thesis of 'being as communion' by his emphasis upon the primordial nature of the term 'person' -- located in a notion of the Father as cause. He posits, in reference to Barth, that a properly developed notion of communion would lead beyond the traditional problems of monism.

A more unambiguous affirmation of the primordial nature of the intra-personal communion of the Trinity than [Barth] offers would have exposed as vacuous any attempt to determine ultimate origins or ontological grounds in terms of a) monist or static notions of divine substance of essence, or b) monadic, Cartesian conceptions of a divine ego or 'subject of consciousness'.⁸⁹

We would concur with Torrance's belief that a notion of the intra-personal communion of the Trinity is necessary to unmask traditional monist notions of ontology. Nonetheless we wonder whether any such formulation can render 'vacuous' the tendency to objectivise God in a monadic notion of being.⁹⁰ It would seem that no formula can of itself avoid the deeply rooted tendency to objectivise God.

Zizioulas groups Alan Torrance together with thinkers like Moltmann and Buber in the claim that they fail to maintain the particularity of the person in

88 A.Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, p.290, asks 'whether a foundationalist ontology of personhood together with attendant notions of personal freedom, creativity and, in particular, causality do not threaten to become the driving force (or 'critical control') in [Zizioulas'] exposition of the doctrine of God.' cf. p.77-8, 200-01, 300.

89 A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, p. 258.

90 As Colin Gunton aptly notes, in *The One the Three and the Many*, p.213, '[a]ntiquity and modernity alike are deficient in their tendency to drive towards unitary conceptions of social being and order.'

using an essentialism of relation.⁹¹ The very fact that Zizioulas can group such diverse thinkers together should raise questions to his reader. Zizioulas desires to hold together the apparent contradiction of particularity and unity within the very description of the being of God and therefore the description of the created world as well. His approach suggests that we cannot in fact mask the paradox which has plagued philosophy since Heraclitus and Parmenides; rather, Zizioulas suggests that the two poles of particularity and unity must be held together at the same time. Yet he in turn, utilises an emphasis upon the particular as a basis to hold together particularity and unity. The paradox of person and communion as two ontologically primordial categories are held together in the particular person of the Father; who in his very existence is neither a monadic being, nor the locus of a relational matrix. Returning to the discussion in chapter two of this thesis, it appears that we see Zizioulas inadvertently supporting De Regnon's thesis that in our doctrine of the Trinity we must choose between an approach that emphasises the persons or an approach that emphasises the unity.

We would suggest that a concept of relation which resonates with Zizioulas' own understanding of the Trinity must begin with a notion of persons in relation; not only in term of God's being but in terms of human being. God constitutes humanity on two levels: the first is that he constitutes us as physical beings and the second is that he desires to constitute us as persons who order themselves and their world in relation to him. This does not involve a simple intellectual assent to our dependence upon God as a 'source', for in a sense this would deny the freedom which and with which God gives to us. Rather, what is significant in our relation to God is that humanity is given the 'space' to respond to him. God is able to allow space in his relation to the world because he is not dependent upon the world for his existence, nor is he in some way tied to the world. Space does not precede relation but is an aspect of relation if it is to be more than a simple platonic continuity or idealist collapsing of the many into the one. In relation to humanity, God allows space, not by a kenotic denial of himself, nor by disengaging from the world in order that humanity in transcending this world might encounter God. Rather God allows a space of 'situated freedom' within the parameters of his dynamic and continuing engagement with the

91 Zizioulas has grouped Torrance together with people like Buber, Lossky and Moltmann in suggesting that his concept of communion becomes an essentialism of relation. 'The Father as Cause', Research Institute in Systematic Theology, Kings College London, October 14, 1997

world. This space is not a 'letting-be' as though God steps back to allow humanity to reciprocate what he has done for them, rather, it is a freedom to live in response to God's continuous grace towards us. God's relation to the world is not alien to the truth of the world for it completes and realises the truth of the world. Gunton suggests that the notion of perichoresis might be used as a transcendental notion of how all things exist in a mutually constitutive matrix.⁹² We would agree with this in so far as it is recognised that the relational matrix of the world is truly perichoretic when it is ordered towards God in response to his free relatedness to humanity. Therefore, God enters into the matrix of the relations which constitute the world and in entering into those relations God transforms them not by changing their form but by redirecting them into a dynamic communion with himself.⁹³ Dynamic relations are the matrix of all created existence; 'we too are particulars in relation, both with respect to the primary constitution of our being by God and by its secondary constitution in patterns of created sociality by human society.'⁹⁴

Conclusion

John Zizioulas' understanding of a relational ontology has a depth of coherence which many other modern relational models do not have. Utilising the patristic distinction of creatio ex nihilo, together with the understanding of God's being as the particularity in unity of the three in one, Zizioulas has provided a model which breaks through some of the fundamental problems of understanding how God is intimately engaged with the world while remaining transcendent from it. Using a model of *analogia relationis* he provides a basis for understanding how we are made in the image of God without lapsing into the problems of essentialist models of being.

Zizioulas' willingness to use existentialist arguments to illuminate his argument is a double edged sword. On the one hand it serves to make his notions accessible and relevant, while on the other hand it means that his

92 '[T]hat we consider the world as an order of things, dynamically related to each other in time and space. It is perichoretic in that everything in it contributes to the being of everything else, enabling everything to be what it distinctively is.' Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many* p. 166. Cf. p.169-170.

93 Which, once again, returns us to our argument of chapter two of this thesis where we argued for the need for some concept of ordering in relation to God.

94 Gunton, *The One the Three and the Many* p.214.

ideas are at times diluted by an excessive emphasis upon the particular. The title of his book *Being as Communion* emphasises his concern to displace substantialist notions of being. Yet, the balance of his argument leans towards guarding the priority of the particular.

It is our belief that Zizioulas' project provides a basis for reinterpreting the fundamental issues in a theological anthropology. There remain two pivotal issues which need further discussion in light of Zizioulas' thesis. The first, which will be the basis of chapter six, regards the understanding of human finitude and the issue of sin and the fall. The second, which we will take up in chapter seven, is to do with the understanding of how Christ and the Spirit, the two hands of God, together constitute the ecclesial community.

Section C. The Mediation of Personhood

Chapter Six: Human Limitation and Corruption

Introduction

In chapter five when we discussed Zizioulas' relational ontology we raised some questions with regard to his understanding of human finitude. It may seem strange to question how he understands the limits which are inherent to humanity when he is clearly concerned to unmask traditional attempts to define human beings on the basis of capacity or incapacity. In order to provide a context for these issues we need to enter into the discussion of the implications and significance of the fall and human sinfulness. This argument becomes particularly complex when we attempt to understand an Orthodox position on the issues of sin and the fall, for the East approaches these issues from a radically different perspective than the West.

Many western theologians remain highly critical of the failure of the East to deal with the issue of sin. That Zizioulas devotes little time to the issue of sin may appear as a startling omission to a western thinker in so far as western theology, on the whole, has invested much time and effort in attempting to understand and describe human sinfulness. For many theologians in the West to fail to address the primacy of sin in any understanding of the person would be

to trivialise the cross of Jesus Christ,...to ignore, euphemize, or otherwise mute the lethal reality of sin is to cut the nerve of the gospel. For the sober truth is that without full disclosure on sin, the gospel of grace becomes impertinent, unnecessary, and finally uninteresting.¹

While one might appreciate Plantinga's concern that we not overlook the seriousness of sin, it is important to realise that he is speaking in the context of a wide ranging debate in western theology regarding the doctrine of sin. The question of the place and significance of a doctrine of sin has been hotly debated in the West, particularly in the past two centuries, with some theologians arguing for a central place for it and others who believe that an overemphasis upon sin has shaped theology in negative ways. It is vital to attempt to understand some of the issues which lie behind the Eastern position rather than interpreting Eastern thinkers from within the Western debate. Space does not allow us to do deal with the full scope of the issues involved in this debate.

¹ Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way it Was Supposed to Be. A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) p.199.

Therefore we will focus upon those issues which are most pertinent to our understanding of Zizioulas' relational ontology.

The fall and the sinfulness of humanity have certainly been central questions in the Christian tradition. There have been all kinds of models which have attempted to juggle the different issues of humanity's freedom, the question of evil, the inherent 'goodness' of creation and the present reality of humanity's condition. Inevitably there is some confusion and apparent contradiction in whatever way these elements are put together especially with the question of how the individual person is to be held accountable for sin. The doctrine of the fall has been an important element in attempts to affirm that the world is not the way it was supposed to be. However, we will argue that much of the western tradition has sought to use the doctrine of the fall to account for the apparently contradictory 'forces' of human existence in inappropriate ways.²

1.1. The Western Debate

Central to the debate in the West, with regard to the significance of Adam's sin for all of humankind, has been Augustine's concept of original sin. The question it sought to answer was what was the 'essential' difference between humanity before the fall and humanity after the fall. The force of Augustine's argument was shaped by his response to Pelagius' anthropological optimism.³ Augustine's concern was to emphasise that the result of the fall was a substantial change in humanity's situation. Unfortunately the emphasis upon the substantial change which occurred as a result of the fall may easily appear to suggest a change in the substance of human nature either through an imposed limitation or through the addition of some foreign substance. The danger in suggesting that the fall has led to the limitation of humanity is the assumption that before the fall humanity was not limited. Augustine's suggestion that the fall was a fall from perfection to imperfection suggests that before the fall humanity was 'complete'. This suggestion tends towards a Gnostic denigration of the 'natural' limits of the material world.

The other danger which arises in seeking to establish the substantial results of the fall is that sin might be seen as substantive. As the concept of original sin has

² The nineteenth century attempt to do away with the doctrine of the fall could be seen to reflect the desire to unmask the fact that the doctrine was carrying far more than it should have.

³ Douglas Farrow, 'The Fall' in *Oxford Companion to Christian Thought*, ed. Adrian Hastings (Oxford; Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

developed and been interpreted, the nexus of sin has been located in the static substance of human nature.⁴

The concept of human nature as an 'essence' or as at bottom an essentially unvariable type, or as a simple instead of a complex whole inevitably before the idea of development altered our mode of conceiving of things, is one which must share with the loose usage of the term 'sin' and its derivatives... the responsibility for the confusion which has enveloped the discussion of human sinfulness and its cause.⁵

Where ontology has been described in terms of a static essence, sin has been necessarily identified as something static and essential as well. The fallacy behind all of this is the assumption that our problem is sin, as though sin were something substantial in itself. That this continues to be an issue is evidenced by the number of people who are careful to assert that sin is not something in its own right.⁶ Sin is not 'something' in the sense of a force or power which exists in its own right.⁷

Augustine's thesis that human 'nature' had been infected with guilt which is transmitted from generation to generation has been difficult to accept in modern times. It must be acknowledged that,

at each step the old theory which traces human sinfulness to an original acquired defect of nature encounters difficulties when examined closely. Apart from its precariousness, if we may not say its untenability, from the point of view of empirical science, it is a nest of psychological and ethical inconsistencies.⁸

It is not therefore surprising that in the nineteenth century there was a strong reaction against the concept of original sin. In the West the question raised by historical criticism with regard to the existence of the historical Adam forced a re-evaluation of the origin of sin.⁹ Furthermore in both East and West Augustine's

⁴ We must avoid thinking of sin in static terms. Alistair McFadyen, 'Sins of Praise: The Assault on God's Freedom' in *God and Freedom* ed. Colin Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

⁵ McFarlane *Christ and the Spirit* p.31.

⁶ Paul Ricoeur *The Hermeneutics of Symbols*: p.303, asserts that 'sin is not something, but a subversion of a relation'. Yet, he denounces any attempt to belittle the significance of sin by suggesting its 'non-being'. It has being in that it is the subversion of an intended objective reality, a reality which refuses to be thwarted by sin, but overcomes only by grace. Cited by McFarlane *Christ and the Spirit*. p.120.

⁷ '[S]in is a parasite, an uninvited guest that keeps tapping its host for sustenance. Nothing about sin is its own; all its power, persistence, and plausibility are stolen goods. Sin is not really an entity but a spoiler of entities, not an organism but a leech on organisms,...the old Augustinian idea that evil has no existence except as a privation of good.' Plantinga, *Not the Way it Was Supposed to Be*. p.89.

⁸ FR Tennant, *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press. 1908) p.30-31.

⁹ 'Nineteenth century biblical criticism discredited the historical nature of the Adam and Eve story. At the same time the wide acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis led to the view that

concept of the transmission of original sin has been discounted as a misinterpretation of Romans 5:12.¹⁰

At the same time there has been a reaction against the juridical terms of punishment which appeared to be hard to justify in light of a loving God. The idea of Jesus appeasing a wrathful God develops all too easily into an idea of a petty God who was intent on wreaking vengeance on those who had slighted Him.

[E]xcessive preoccupation with the juridical aspects of the doctrine of justification has led to versions of penal substitution which do appear to attribute to God an excessively punitive character. So much hangs on a sensitive appreciation of what are the possibilities and limits of the legal metaphor.¹¹

The polarisation between those who insist on the inherent goodness of humanity and those who insist that humanity has done wrong and needs to be punished for it has led the debate into the question of what humanity is in its own right, 'good or bad'. It is not difficult to see that in both instances the basic question rests on what humanity is in itself. This in turn was compounded by Rousseau's ideal of the essential goodness of human nature. As a result, there was a growing unwillingness to accept the thesis that humanity was corrupted at the core.

1.2. Realignment of the Understanding of Original Sin

In the twentieth century in the light of two world wars, it has become more difficult to sustain an ideal of the inherent goodness of humanity.¹² Yet, with the adoption of the Cartesian notion of individual autonomy there has not been a general reacceptance of the notion of original sin as the basis for a concept of

man had progressed from his primeval state instead of falling from a higher one. Nineteenth century theology tended to see man, not as a sinner, but as an essentially good creature who was destined to become better. The doctrines of the fall and original sin have been revived in the twentieth century. Few theologians today accept the view that guilt can be inherited. But theologians are widely agreed that the state in which we find man is out of harmony with God's will and purposes for him.' William Horden, *Dictionary of Christian Theology* ed. Alan Richardson, (London: SCM, 1969)s.v. 'Man, Doctrine of'.

¹⁰ See Panayiotis Papageorgiou, 'Chrysostom and Augustine on the Sin of Adam and Its Consequences'. *SVTQ* 39:4, 1995 p.361.

¹¹ Colin Gunton *The Actuality of the Atonement: A Study of Metaphor, Rationality and the Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989 p.101.

¹² 'Before two world wars 'our grandfathers in their simplicity found it hard, if not impossible, to believe in original sin; it is not so with us; perhaps among the traditional dogmas this one alone can now be accepted as self-evident.' JH Walgrave 'Incarnation and Atonement' in *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed AD 381*, (Edinburgh: Handsel Press, 1981) p.153.

inherited guilt. Montaigne's thesis which emphasised individual 'nature' over a general human 'Nature', called into question the notion of a universal human nature and by implication the idea of inherited guilt.¹³ Rather than describing a doctrine which addresses the condition of the whole of humanity and creation, the focus has been upon the individual. This in turn is compounded in that,

the Western concept of original sin led to a tendency to operate with a dualism of inner and outer person. Original sin came to be seen as that which qualified the inner being, and was wiped away by baptism.¹⁴

The understanding has developed that what needs to be set right is the inner person and the important distinction between original sin and actual sin has been collapsed into the context of the individual.¹⁵ The development of the notion of individual autonomy combined with the loss of accepted transcendental values has led to a realignment of the notion of sin.

The increasingly subjective turn of the modern mind has meant that treatments of the human plight and its healing have taken an increasingly inward and individualistic direction, as the thought of two modern heirs of Luther, Kierkegaard and Bultmann, demonstrate clearly. Some forms of pietism and mysticism illustrate the same trend.¹⁶

Far from identifying the fall and original sin with something which has affected all of humanity, and through humanity the world as well, the context of sin became identified with the inner substance or life of the individual.¹⁷ With the understanding of the fall as a movement from perfection to incompleteness combined with a concept of individual autonomy there is a tendency to see salvation in terms of the completion of the individual.¹⁸

¹³ See chapter three of this thesis. section II-A.

¹⁴ Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*, p.186.

¹⁵ 'Only a Christology which meets with and resolves both characteristics [actual sin and original sin] of the tensives symbolism of sin can be deemed relevant to the human predicament.' McFarlane *Christ and the Spirit*. p.118.

¹⁶ Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*. p.101.

¹⁷ This in turn made possible the idea that sin was solely subjective. Tennent *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*. P.68, notes 'it is Schleiermacher's peculiar doctrine that sin has no objective reality, but is only sin from our subjective point of view. It is real, but only in our consciousness. Sin, in fact, is consciousness of sin.'

¹⁸ 'Western theology has by and large ... shown a repeated tendency to overmoralise its understanding of the atonement. Its vision has become increasingly anthropocentric and individualistic at the expense of aspects of the tradition which see salvation as being in and with the whole created order.' Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* p.137.

2.1. The Eastern Response

Given the parameters of the debate it is hardly surprising that those on the outside have been, at times, bemused by the positions taken by various parties.¹⁹ Eastern theologians have reacted more often than not against the extremes of the western debate. For them the foundation of the argument is itself flawed they would not question the sinfulness of humanity but they do question the notion of inherited guilt. 'The idea of transmitted guilt, a central feature of Augustine's later doctrine of original sin, is totally absent from the Greek patristic tradition'.²⁰ This has led them to reject soteriological motifs which are heavily concerned with a legal justification. At first glance it may appear that Orthodox thinkers are siding with the humanists who want to do away with the idea of judgement for sin and are concerned to emphasise human dignity and freedom. However, to group Orthodox thinkers with the humanist response to a doctrine of sin is to misunderstand what lies behind their position. There are several layers to the differences between the East and the West on these issues. In order to understand why their perspectives seem at times to be so radically different we need to examine some foundational concerns.

2.2. The Incarnation: Redemption or Deification?

It is commonly noted that the East approaches the issue of soteriology through theosis where the West focuses on redemption from sin. Behind the distinct emphases of the East and the West lies a significant difference in perception with regard to the nature of humanity before the fall. The East, following Irenaeus' notion of recapitulation, believes that humanity was not mature before the fall. This does not mean that they thought of humanity as imperfect or incomplete, rather, it means that humanity was immature yet, with the hope of progressing to maturity in relationship with God. The West, in turn, has tended to follow Augustine's lead in perceiving the fall as a fall from a perfect state to an

¹⁹ 'There developed in the West a tendency to conceive the human relation to God largely in terms of legal obligations (and, it might be added, a corresponding perplexity in the Eastern church about Western atonement theology as a whole). The central motif is demand: ...Without doubt, many Western theologies of atonement have tended to be legalistic, making it appear that God is a God of law before he is a God of love.' Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* p.86-87.

²⁰ Gregory of Nyssa and Gregory of Nazianzus both taught that infants are born without sin, an idea which stands in contrast to Augustine's doctrine of the universal sinfulness of fallen humanity. McGrath, *Christian Theology* p.370 The idea of inherited guilt is indeed absent from much of the Greek tradition but it is certainly not totally absent as Nellas testifies. Panayiotis Nellas, 'Redemption or Deification?: Nicholas Kavalas and Anselm's Question "Why did God Become Man?"' *Sourozh* 66 Dec. 1996 p.10.

imperfect one. Nellas speaks of two axes which have been used to define the work of Christ in the incarnation: An axis of *fall -- redemption* and an axis of *creation -- deification*. His point being that the issue of sin and the fall is not the basis for a new axis but is in fact a segment on the axis of creation -- deification.²¹ In light of this difference it is immediately apparent how the Western position points to sin as the problem which needs to be addressed while the East sees sin as a secondary issue which has simply complicated the fact that humanity was not created fully mature in the first place. Orthodox thinkers would not deny that sin must be dealt with in order to restore humanity. Rather, they would emphasise that what has happened or what should be focal to the discussion is that humanity has been returned to the possibility of developing to maturity in relation to God.

2.3. Original Sin and the Results of the Fall

For Zizioulas, like most Orthodox, the fall did not result in 'original sin' as though human nature has been stained. For Zizioulas the result of the fall is that humanity is alienated from God. This alienation in turn means that the biological hypostasis is limited ultimately by death. Rather than speaking of a 'corruption' of human nature Zizioulas is suggesting that the result of Adam's sin is that death became the limit on humanity. He is not suggesting that death is a result of the fall but that death became inevitable for humanity because of Adam's sin. Reversing Augustine's faulty interpretation of Romans 5:12 which would suggest that in Adam all have sinned and therefore all will die, Zizioulas suggests that sin or the sinfulness of the human person is the result of the limitation of death. The fall is not the grounds for a doctrine of the transmission of sin but simply for the limitation of mortality. For Zizioulas it is as a result of this limitation of death that all human persons sin; actual sin is not to be confused with Adam's sin.

Zizioulas' emphasis that the single result of the fall is death distinguishes him from other Orthodox thinkers, such as Lossky, who would allow that the results of the fall include some form of corruption as well as the 'penalty' of death both of which 'distance' humanity from God.

[A]fter the fall, two obstacles intervene to make this distance unbridgeable: sin itself, which makes human nature incapable of receiving grace, and death, the outcome of that fallenness which precipitates man into an anti-natural state where the will of man, contaminating the cosmos, gives to non-being a paradoxical and tragic reality.²²

²¹ Nellas, 'Redemption or Deification?' p. 11.

²² OT p.84.

And Timothy Ware notes, 'humans (Orthodox usually teach) automatically inherit Adam's corruption and mortality.'²³ The view that humanity inherited both mortality and corruption (without inferring an inheritance of guilt) can be traced all the way back to Chrysostom.²⁴ This calls into question Zizioulas' singular emphasis upon mortality as the ultimate result of the fall. We must be clear at this point that Zizioulas believes that the ultimate corruption of humanity is death, thus to speak of death is to speak of a radical corruption of humanity. We would not deny that death, as we experience it, is a significant determinant in human constitution; rather, what concerns us here is whether or not the whole of the corruption of humanity and the created world can be equated with death. Is Zizioulas at this point appropriating a modified view of Heidegger's 'being unto death' where the paradox of existence is oriented around death?

In some ways it might be possible to identify the corruption of the world with the implications of and the response to death. For example we might move on from Zizioulas' position to suggest that sin or sinful behaviour arises from the attempt of human persons to escape the limitation posed by death by looking to themselves rather than God. There certainly are grounds for understanding human sinfulness in this light, as though we attempt to create our own world, or reality, to avoid the truth of our own finiteness. Whether this is through deception, distraction, or pride all of these responses can reflect our reaction against the limitations which are imposed upon us through our mortality. Furthermore, this model avoids the tendency to identify original sin as a change to the static substance of humanity or as something transmitted genetically. Yet, if we are to develop this line of thought then we are in fact returning to a more broadly developed notion of corruption than Zizioulas seeks to emphasise.

Zizioulas' move away from describing the results of the fall as a change in human nature may not be as negative as it first appears. One way that some Orthodox writers have understood the results of the fall is that the body which was created immortal has now become mortal. Lossky, following an idea which goes back through Palamas to Gregory of Nyssa, speaks of the garments of skin which have been given to humanity as a result of the fall.²⁵ The idea of the change to the constitution of our physical bodies does allow for the significance

²³ Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 4th ed. (London: Penguin Books, 1963) p.224.

²⁴ Papageorgiou, 'Chrysostom and Augustine on the Sin of Adam', p. 366.

²⁵ MT p.104.

of the corruption of human nature which has happened after the fall. However, it also seems in danger of running into exactly the same problems as Augustine's notion of the transmission of sin by linking it to a change in the substance of humanity. Furthermore, emphasising a change in human nature could seem to suggest that the limitations which are a part of the 'fallen' human condition are associated with original sin. Thereby the goal becomes overcoming the limitations of human nature; which again returns us to one of the problems with the doctrine of original sin.

Zizioulas insists that sin has not resulted in any change to human nature or the *logos* of humanity. What has changed is the *tropos* or mode of existence of humanity. This distinction prevents the perception of the results of the fall as a change in the 'substance' of humanity. Of course if we begin with a notion of relational ontology we must ask whether or not we can even speak of the static substance of humanity; which in turn forces the issue of how we might speak of a change in the constitutive elements of human existence as a result of the fall. That will be an issue we pick up a little later in the chapter. At present we would simply affirm that Zizioulas' approach, which steers clear of the idea of a change in the substance of humanity in favour of the limitation of mortality, may be preferable to models which try to do justice to the corruption of humanity through a change in human nature.

2.4. Christology and Harmartiology

Returning to the difference between the approaches of the East and the West we note that Eastern thinkers are concerned with a tendency to ignore that the incarnation has restored humanity on its initial course, which is both to be in communion with God and to be stewards of creation. Instead, they perceive that in the West, the work and life of Christ is identified primarily with the need to deal with individual human sinfulness: 'the Christian life is regarded not so much as the realisation of Adam's original destiny, as a dynamic transformation of man and the world and as a union with God, but as a simple escape from sin.'²⁶ The incarnation is determined by sin rather than sin being determined by the incarnation. Thus the incarnation becomes an emergency measure which is instituted in order to correct something which has gone badly wrong instead of being the very basis of God's continual and active extension of love towards us

²⁶ Nellas, *Deification in Christ*. p.95.

which is not changed by sin but simply re-routed.²⁷ For the East, the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is not that somehow God was able to deal with sin but that sin was proved to be an insignificant force in the face of God's grace and power.²⁸ Sin which at times seems to be the controlling and shaping force of our lives was exposed as a second rate impostor which did not have any hold over the humanity of Christ and through him need not have any hold over us.²⁹ Zizioulas and Lossky are both concerned that in the West the telos for humanity becomes forgiveness of sin rather than theosis.³⁰ Zizioulas seeks to balance the two concerns of redemption and theosis.

Christology should not be confined to redemption from sin but reaches beyond that, to man's destiny as the image of God in creation. There are two aspects in Christology, one negative (redemption from the fallen state) and another positive (fulfilment of man's full communion with God; what the Greek fathers have called theosis). Only if the two are taken together, can Christology reveal human destiny in its fullness.³¹

Zizioulas is anxious to propose an alternative to what he sees as a preoccupation in western soteriology with a focus on sin. In fact, his concern is to step outside of the boundaries in which the argument over sin and salvation is usually conducted.

Within the Western tradition the tendency to interpret Christology solely in terms of God's response to the sinfulness of humanity has led to placing the doctrine of sin as a precursor to Christology.³² As a result the doctrine of sin is

²⁷ This assumes Irenaeus' doctrine of recapitulation where the original state of created humanity was not one of perfection but a state in which the possibility of communion with God was at its starting point. Thus the work of Christ was not primarily to deal with sin, although he did that, but to establish the basis for communion between the created and uncreated in an incontrovertible way. In this we also see the concept promoted by Scotus, that Christ would have come even if it were not for sin. Nellas in *Deification in Christ* pp.37-38, 94-95, discusses the positive and negative aspects of the Scotus thesis.

²⁸ 'However frightening evil may be, since it and not Christ constitutes an event or an episode, it is shown in the last analysis to be puny. The understanding of man, -of salvation, of the spiritual life, and so on- is detached from evil and united with Christ. Evil is made relative. Even the greatest depth of sin does not touch upon the origin and destiny of man.' Nellas, *Deification in Christ*. p.41.

²⁹ But the place of God was not destroyed by the sin of man; the vocation of the first Adam was fulfilled by Christ, the second Adam. *MT* p.133-34.

³⁰ There is a tendency for Orthodox theologians to overlook the understanding of theosis in the West (albeit a different understanding than that of the East) which we find in many places for example Aquinas' 'vision of God'.

³¹ Zizioulas 'Capacity' p.434.

³² This is not true of the whole of the Western tradition, 'for Barth there is no discrete treatment of the doctrine of sin; rather, hamartiology falls under the larger rubric of reconciliation'. Kathryn Greene-McCreight, 'Gender, Sin and Grace: Feminist Theologies meet Karl Barth's Hamartiology.' *SJT* 50:4, 1997 p.425.

discussed as a category before or apart from the doctrine of the incarnation.³³ Rather than sin being located within the context of a broader understanding of Christology it has become the means by which the incarnation is understood. Not only has this distorted Christology but it has also resulted in confusion over the doctrine of sin. There is a failure to establish that sin is only revealed as sin in the light of Christ.

[W]hile a person may certainly be conscious of immoral acts and false motives, the reality of man's sinful state can never be perceived merely by self knowledge. The totality and inclusiveness of Adam's sin and the consequent depravity of all is an issue that is only truly made known in the cross.³⁴

Apart from Christ there can be no adequate doctrine of sin; first because only Christ reveals sin for what it truly is and secondly because sin is bound up with the rejection of Christ.³⁵

We would argue that the concept of sin remains abstract apart from God's engagement through Christ and by the Spirit. 'It is only through the triune God's being and relation to the world that we know what it means to speak of sin as a refusal of or assault on God's sovereignty and freedom.'³⁶ There is a failure to recognise that apart from the Spirit engaging with and relating to a person there is no possibility of truly recognising sin for what it is.³⁷

In the classical Christian story as presented in John's gospel, judgement is not effected by uttering words of condemnation but by a quite complex process of interaction. The words and works of Jesus...force to light hidden directions and dispositions that otherwise never come to view.³⁸

³³ Barth CD IV:I p.359, distinguishes himself from the tradition on this point. In *Jesus, God and Man*, Wolfhart Pannenberg devotes some time to discussing how the approach to Christology through different soteriological motifs has significantly altered the essential understanding of Christ.

³⁴ J.E. Colwell *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. B.Ferguson and D.F. Wright (Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1988) s.v. 'Sin' p.643.

³⁵ 'We can only see the infinite guilt in which we stand over against God; the God who became man.' Karl Barth *Dogmatics in Outline* Trans. by GT Thomson (London: SCM Press, 1949)p. 105.

³⁶ McFadyen, 'Sins of Praise'. p.42.

³⁷ John 16:8-11 The Spirit convicts (ἐλέγξει) the world of its sin. Ἐλέγξει means expose 'where the object of the process is not simply to prove an opponent wrong but to persuade him that he is wrong and so to change his mind'. C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John: An Introduction with Commentary and Notes on the Greek Text*. 2nd ed.(London: SPCK, 1978) p.486 Yet the world cannot receive him (John 14:17) Therefore the Spirit convicts the world in and through the Church.

³⁸ Rowan Williams 'Post-modern Theology and the Judgement of the World'. In *Postmodern Theology* ed. FB Burnham (New York: Harper Collins, 1989) p.96.

A doctrine of sin developed apart from Christ and the Spirit can fail to take into account that sin is primarily about the disruption of our communion with God and can only be understood in the context of God's engagement with us.³⁹

2.5. Sin and the Moral Code

One result of interpreting Christology simply as a response to the fall is that sin can be described first and foremost as the transgression of a moral code.⁴⁰

Influenced by the western teaching on original sin, we usually place sin in a legal setting. We regard it as disobedience to the commandments of God, and its results as punishments inflicted by God.⁴¹

The danger Nellas is seeking to illuminate is that a primary focus upon a moral code can all too easily lead to abstracting that code from the God who gives it context and meaning.⁴² 'The essence of sin consists not in the infringement of ethical standards but in a falling away from the divine eternal life for which man was made and to which, by his very nature, he is called.'⁴³ When the legal metaphors are pushed too far they result in a contractual rather than a personal and relational conception of the Christian life. For those in the East it is the tendency towards a polemic emphasis which is of primary concern.

Zizioulas picks up on and clearly rejects a polemical use of the legal metaphors. While he does not reject the issue of sin he wants to suggest that it is not an issue of individual morality, or psychological guilt but an issue of the perversion of our relation to God and to the whole of creation. The fall has to do with the rejection of God rather than the rejection of a moral code. Human beings have looked to themselves rather than to God for meaning, purpose and identity.

³⁹ Barth expresses this point in *Dogmatics in Outline* p.105-106.

⁴⁰'[T]he western *ordo salutis* was characterised at the epistemological level by the primacy of law and nature over grace.' A.Torrance, *Persons in Communion* p.61.

⁴¹ Nellas *Deification in Christ* p.177.

⁴² The relational emphasis is also clearly the perspective of Paul who 'understands sin not as a collection of individual acts but as a relationship of hostility towards God.' Stephen H. Travis, 'Christ as the Bearer of Divine Judgement in Paul's Thought' in *Jesus of Nazareth, Lord and Christ*. eds. J.B.Green and M. Turner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) p.345.

⁴³ Archimandrite Sophrony quoted in McFarlane, *Christ and the Spirit* p. 110.

For since the fall results from the claim of created man to be the ultimate point of reference in existence (to be God) it is, in the final analysis, the state of existence whereby the created world tends to posit its being ultimately with reference to itself and not to an uncreated being, God. Idolatry, i.e. turning created existence into an ultimate point of reference is the form that the fall takes but what lies behind it is the fact that man refuses to refer created being to communion with God.⁴⁴

For Zizioulas the question is what has been distorted -- a moral code or a relation with God. He insists that the problem is not essentially a moral problem but it is that human beings are not existing as persons in communion. The broken relationship with God is not primarily an issue of morality: '[S]in reveals itself not in the form of a juridical relationship between God and man, but mainly as a perversion of personhood'.⁴⁵ Zizioulas is concerned that an emphasis upon a moral code takes the focus off the relational issues. To understand his position we need to return briefly to his understanding of human capacity and incapacity.

3.1. Capacity/Incapacity

When Zizioulas discusses the issue of human capacity and human incapacity, he is seeking to move beyond the polemics of the western discussion. Zizioulas opposes what he sees as the very basis of the debate: 'man has been presented either by stressing his state of sin (e.g. R.Niebuhr) or emphasising his capacity for God (e.g. K. Rahner)'.⁴⁶ In the language of the biological and ecclesial hypostasis, Zizioulas is concerned to establish that the failure to become a person is not the result of an acquired fault but of the very constitution of the biological hypostasis.⁴⁷ This inevitable failure is in fact the natural outcome of the biological existence when it is taken in itself. It is not wrong, in the sense with which we in the West normally view sin and moral culpability.⁴⁸ It is rather the natural outcome of the givenness of our existence. 'Sin is not to be understood as bringing about something new (there is no creative power in evil) but as revealing and actualising the limitations and potential dangers inherent in creaturehood, if creation is left to itself.'⁴⁹ Furthermore, Zizioulas rightly

⁴⁴ BC p.102.

⁴⁵ Zizioulas, 'Capacity', p.434.

⁴⁶ Zizioulas, 'Capacity', pp.404-05.

⁴⁷ 'The tragedy of the biological constitution of man's hypostasis does not lie in his not being a person because of it, it lies in his tending towards becoming a person and failing. Sin is precisely this failure. And sin is the tragic prerogative of the person alone.' BC p.52.

⁴⁸ For Zizioulas sin is more or less a fault of the human being's immaturity and innocence, it is not primarily a question of guilt but of failure. Conversation Oct. 21,96.

⁴⁹ BC p.102.

emphasises that the limitations which are natural to human constitution should not be considered sin.⁵⁰

There are in fact two key concerns which must be held together at the same time: the first is that humanity and not God must be held responsible for the corruption of the world after the fall and secondly it must be clear that humanity is not capable of undoing the results of the fall. The apparent solution to this paradox is to suggest that humanity had a capacity which they then lost in the fall. This of course is the target of Zizioulas' argument that the issue is not one of capacity and incapacity.

That these concerns are not always understood is evidenced by some western models of salvation which seem to place repentance as a condition of redemption or any engagement with God.⁵¹ The goal becomes dealing with sin rather than relationship to God. The direction of this excessive focus upon sin means that the emphasis can be placed upon a person dealing with sin in order to present themselves righteous before God. Paradoxically this pelagian idea is itself sinful in so far as it suggests that a human being can in themselves do anything to restore communion with God. And it is this suggestion which has been the target of Augustine and the Reformers in their insistence on human incapacity. The argument appears to be between those who would seek to affirm the responsibility and dignity of human persons and those who would seek to affirm the significance of the corruption which has resulted from the fall.

The question of how a person is implicated in original sin clearly becomes more of an issue when the individual is given a high degree of autonomy. However, the fact that it is difficult to assign responsibility for our current condition does not mean that the culpability of humanity should be overlooked.⁵² The definition of personhood is central to this argument. The very elusiveness of this definition makes it very difficult to agree on assigning responsibility. Clearly,

⁵⁰ In this Zizioulas is actually echoing the words of Barth. '[T]he imperfection and problematic nature of his existence is not as such his sin.' Barth CD IV:I p.360.

⁵¹ James Torrance, 'The Vicarious Humanity of Christ' in *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed AD 381*, ed. T.F Torrance (London: Handsel Press. 1981) p.142, discusses the distinction Calvin made between legal and evangelical repentance to suggest that 'in the New Testament *forgiveness is logically prior to repentance*.'

⁵² "The true and final question, then, is not about the 'what' and 'how it happened'. This is a mystery beyond our understanding, the more so because, as P.Geach says, we ourselves are too much involved in it. The question is about the 'that' and the 'why it happened'." J.H. Walgrave, 'Incarnation and Atonement'. in *The Incarnation: Ecumenical Studies in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed AD 381*, p. 154.

responsibility and the concept of personhood are closely linked.⁵³ (It is interesting to note that several theologians suggest that the refusal to acknowledge responsibility is itself an act of sin.)⁵⁴ Yet, as we have argued above, the 'capacity' to recognise sin and assume responsibility is itself a gift of God's relating to us. Not only must we assume responsibility for our own actions but in overturning the myth of the autonomous individual we need to address the concept of culpability. Justice should never be limited simply to individual culpability based upon a cognitive will. Rather it is only in turning to and relating to God that the implications of disordered humanity and our own individual responsibilities within that disordered state will become clear.⁵⁵ The Reformers' emphasis upon utter human incapacity need not deny the responsibility of humanity for the fallen situation. A human person is held responsible not for what they are in themselves but for who they are in Christ. That God has reached out to us and related to us means that we are responsible for our response to him.⁵⁶

Zizioulas has correctly reacted against a tendency in the West to identify the moral failure of humanity in terms of individual capacity or incapacity. Yet, has he come far enough in redressing the confusion in these issues and has he understood the importance of the issues in the western debate?⁵⁷ It appears as though Zizioulas has failed to recognise that for many in the West the emphasis upon utter human incapacity after the fall is not to suggest that human finiteness is the result of the fall but to affirm the significance of the fall in disrupting God's intention for humanity. This in turn affirms that the corruption of the world as

⁵³ 'Before long it began to become clear that those whom we do not blame we do not regard as responsible. Those whom we do not regard as responsible we do not see as fully human. And those we do not see as fully human we are willing to twist and manipulate to suit our own convenience.' C. Plantinga Jr. quotes Koestler. *Not the Way it Was Supposed to Be*. p.67.

⁵⁴ 'Environmental determinism and the no-fault morality which usually accompanies it are pretentious. Environmental determinists pretend to know what is almost always hidden from us-namely, the real cause of wrongdoing...In general, we do not know to what extent evildoers are themselves, as agents, the main cause of their evil and to what extent they have fallen into a trap set by others. Only God knows the percentages in these matters.' C. Plantinga Jr. *Not the Way it was Supposed to Be*, p.65.

⁵⁵ 'Here it becomes manifest what sin is. Sin means to reject the grace of God as such, which approaches us and is present to us'. Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* p. 105.

⁵⁶ 'The language of responsibility remains here a theological language, since it may only be understood in the context of our being called by God.' McFadyen, *Sins of Praise* p.51

⁵⁷ McPartlan in *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, p.297 suggests that Zizioulas has simply not yet addressed these issues. 'De Lubac dwells on the moral as well as the ontological barriers to the salvific achievement of personhood. However, Zizioulas focuses only upon the latter barriers. Consideration of the former is particularly necessary in a theological approach as existential as that of Zizioulas.'

we know it is not part of God's good purposes, but a result of human rebellion against God. Rather than entering into a debate over the capacity and incapacity of humanity the emphasis upon the utter incapacity of humanity to restore the relationship with God is intended, by many in the West to illuminate how the fall has radically altered the human situation.

3.2. Perversion of Relation or Moral Disorder?

Zizioulas simply does not accept the need to describe a moral code.⁵⁸ For him morality implies a non-relational criterion as a judge of relations. He believes that we can avoid the language of morality without downplaying the significance of the corruption of the world. Believing that the legalistic and moralistic concepts are a threat to the relational character of existence he seeks to avoid them. Instead, he would prefer to develop the description of the relational state of existence as a means to fully describe the human situation. For Zizioulas to describe just relations we must simply describe more fully the relations we are speaking about. In his concern to avoid identifying the fall with moral categories he goes so far as to suggest that the fall is simply a result of immaturity and is not an issue of guilt but of failure.

It appears as though Zizioulas' singular emphasis upon the need to restore a right relationship with God is in danger of overlooking the significance of the disruption which has been caused by our turning away from God. Alan Torrance is concerned that Zizioulas' approach fails to do justice to the full impact of the corruption of sin. 'The question also requires to be asked whether the distinction between the biological and ecclesial hypostasis does not circumvent too easily the issues posed by the extent of human alienation -- the distortive ravages of social exploitation, extreme poverty and personal tragedy'.⁵⁹ While Zizioulas has moved away from the problems with identifying the fall with a static doctrine of original sin has he in fact adequately established the extent of corruption which has resulted from the fall?

⁵⁸ It is interesting to note at this point that Lossky sees no difficulty in holding that 'the 'physical' concept of sin and its consequences does not, in the teaching of the Eastern church, exclude another element which must always be remembered, the personal, moral aspect, the aspect of fault and punishment.' *MT* p.132 Lossky is more willing to hold onto the moral aspect of sin although he uses his person/nature distinction to legitimise holding together the 'physical' and moral aspects of sin; once again underlining how his notion of the person retains a high degree of autonomy.

⁵⁹ A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion* p. 301.

It is not a case of either/or where we can identify the dislocation of the fall as an issue of a relationship which needs to be restored or a disordering which needs to be set right. In fact, the difficulty with Zizioulas' position is in suggesting that we must choose between identifying the fall with a perversion of relationship or with moral disorder. For the emphasis upon the need for restored relationship might be seen to deny that sin is the very real barrier to that restoration. 'There can be no restoration of relationships unless the nature of the offence against a universal justice is laid bare and attacked at its root'.⁶⁰ The difficulty is to acknowledge that original sin has resulted in a real barrier to communion with God without suggesting that sin is something, that it has its own hypostasis. The purpose of the doctrine of original sin is to assert that the fall has resulted in a change to human situatedness which means that communion with God is no longer 'natural' to humanity.

It is a mistake to suggest that all western approaches to anthropology deal solely with the need to overcome sin to the neglect of our need for restored relations with God.⁶¹ Calvin and Barth among many others have identified original sin with the separation from God, with the broken relationship.⁶²

Several scholars see justice as a relational concept, to be understood against the background of the covenant relationship of God with Israel. In the New Testament, however, it has a meaning far beyond the notion of God's covenant faithfulness to his people: in Paul it refers to God's eschatological, revealing power, in which the sinner is taken up into a new relationship by the grace of God. The point about justice being a relational concept is very important, and worth developing, for it emphasises that justice is not a state but something that takes place between God and the world or between people.⁶³

As Gunton's comments show, placing the emphasis squarely upon a relational ontology does not mean that we must needs dispense with the language of justice. The importance of speaking of justice within the context of a relational ontology is more important today due to the significant development of the understanding of human relationality which has grown out of personalist philosophies. The new emphasis upon our constitution in relations needs to be

⁶⁰ Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*. . p. 161.

⁶¹ 'Without doubt, many Western theologies of atonement have tended to be legalistic, making it appear that God is a God of law before he is a God of love, rather than the reverse, and so failing to do justice to the personal, relational, aspects of the matter. But that is not true of the Western tradition at its best.' Gunton *The Actuality of the Atonement*, p.87.

⁶² William Horden, *Dictionary of Christian Theology* ed. Alan Richardson, (London: SCM, 1969)s.v. 'Man, Doctrine of'.

⁶³ Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*. p.104.

qualified to identify what are 'right relations'. McFadyen elaborates this point in reference to feminist views.

There is naturally, a very live awareness of the ambiguities of speaking of relational terms, and of the consequent dangers of such talk being (deliberately?) misconstrued, so that it is turned again into a justification for dependence and domination (of weak, relational selves [stereotypically women] by strong, unrelated selves [stereotypically men]).⁶⁴

In fact, to avoid idealising relationships for their own sake we must maintain a concept of justice as descriptive of the type of relations we are speaking of.⁶⁵ If we are to avoid an inclusive monistic description of relations (and in that to deny particularity and freedom) we need to describe what those relations are about. Zizioulas' concern to react against the excesses of certain western positions leaves him in the place of downplaying the moral aspect of the broken relationship with the creator. Thus, while we affirm with Zizioulas that the whole context of redemption must be directed towards a relational ontology we would also insist that the ontology be qualified as a particular type of relatedness; that it be 'just' relations.

3.3. The Cross

A concern raised by Alan Torrance is that the cross lacks significance in the theology of Zizioulas. '[T]he question to which we must now turn asks how far Zizioulas' ontology takes seriously the 'brokenness' of the cross -- with which both Jungel and Moltmann have sought to engage so powerfully'.⁶⁶ Indeed when Zizioulas speaks of the suffering of Christ he couches it in terms of Christ's suffering unjustly, but he does not establish how Christ's death has dealt with the brokenness of the world.

The "suffering Son of Man" was a scandal, and yet Jesus by accepting the cross, offered to be that scandal and thus to give to the eschatological reality a dimension of suffering, humility, and service as the way to glory. The cross and the death of Christ became the cornerstones of Christian spirituality, in that they made the way clear from the start that the way to God passes through the "narrow gate" (Matt 7:13) of suffering, humiliation, and service, and not through domination and power.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ McFadyen, 'Sins of Praise' p.39.

⁶⁵ This picks up on something we discussed in chapter two, which was the need to allow for a concept of ordering in relations rather than asserting a principle of homogeneity onto relations.

⁶⁶ A. Torrance, *Persons in Communion* p.303.

⁶⁷ John Zizioulas, 'The Early Christian Community' in *Christian Spirituality: Origins to the Twelfth Century* eds. B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff, J. Leclercq (London: Routledge and Kegan, 1986) p.24.

It appears as though, for Zizioulas, the cross is viewed simply as a model of humility and obedience which all humanity is called to follow. When this is combined with the view that the Orthodox generally emphasise the victory of the resurrection rather than the scandal of the cross⁶⁸ it can appear as though there is no room in this understanding for the significance of the death of Christ in dealing with the corruption of the world. We need to be clear at this point on how Zizioulas understands the death of Christ.

Zizioulas' position is certainly different from those of Moltmann or Jungel, yet, it should not be understood as bypassing the significance of the death of Christ by a focus on the resurrection to the exclusion of the crucifixion. We would not agree with Alan Torrance's implication that Zizioulas has interpreted the death of Christ through the light of the resurrection by suggesting that Christ escaped the passion of his biological nature.⁶⁹ We might suggest that Zizioulas' point is not that the person of Jesus did not suffer and die but that he did not try to escape from death, for as we discussed earlier in this chapter, for Zizioulas the 'passion' of the biological nature is to escape death. On the cross the person of Jesus did not escape death as though he had passed straight on to resurrection.⁷⁰ That the death of Jesus was a real death and as such a true disruption of the cosmos cannot be denied, yet there must remain a measure of apophaticism with regard to the implications of that death for God's being *ad intra*. Thus, Alan Lewis' comment that Zizioulas seems reluctant to acknowledge the death of Jesus as significant for God's being actually resonates with Lewis' own account where he says we 'are compelled to confront the possibility that God's own Son is dead and buried among the transgressors, and that God himself has failed in his fatherhood and deity.'⁷¹ (The significant word in that sentence being 'possibility.'⁷²) Zizioulas is doing nothing more than maintaining a certain apophaticism in positing the significance of the death of Jesus for God's being *ad*

⁶⁸ Barth comments on this distinction in *Dogmatics in Outline*, p.116.

⁶⁹ A. Torrance in *Persons in Communion* p. 304, by his selection of quotations appears to take Lewis' criticism of Zizioulas further than Lewis himself intended.

⁷⁰ Zizioulas maintains that Christ did die in so far as his unity with human nature was a personal unity. This does not however mean that his relation to the Father as his constitutive relation was destroyed in the death of his person.

⁷¹ Alan Lewis, 'The Burial of God: Rupture and Redemption as the Story of Salvation', *SJT* 40 1980 p.347.

⁷² Lewis comments later in the same paper that '[I]n his identity with death, God has not been inactive, defeated or concealed...[God's] identification with mortal finitude revealing and defining his own identity as the God who is neither mortal nor the process of the finite world.' Lewis, *Rupture and Redemption*, p.355.

intra. He asserts that 'the Cross is the only way to the Resurrection, and this does not take away from the Cross its utter shame and repulsiveness'.⁷³ Is this simply a situation in which Zizioulas has not adequately elaborated his position? We need to look more closely at how he understands the implications of the death of Christ on the cross.

The idea of the death of Christ as a victory rather than a defeat is consistent with an emphasis within the Orthodox church⁷⁴ (and following Aulen's *Christus Victor* in the West as well). Zizioulas' emphasis upon Christ passing through the 'narrow gate' suggests that Christ, in his humanity, has triumphed by not denying his relationship to the Father even to the point of death.⁷⁵ Given that Zizioulas views death as the primary result of the fall it is possible to see the death of Christ as a victory over the sinful attempt to avoid our human finiteness at all costs. (Even to the point of turning away from God.) In this case the death of Christ could be seen as a victory over the tendency to choose to live independently of God's will and grace. Lossky develops this idea in his chapter on the economy of the Son.⁷⁶ Unlike Aulen's emphasis upon the divine victory won in the death of Christ, the Orthodox position points to the idea of 'the life and cross of Jesus as the victory of the 'proper man' over human temptation and sin'.⁷⁷ This is clearly not the same as seeing that the death of Christ involves paying the price for sin in a substitutionary way, yet, equally it need not avoid the significance of the death on the cross as an aspect of dealing with the power of sin. It is clearly possible to posit that the power of sin over humanity is broken in Christ's obedience to the Father.⁷⁸ Lossky seems to reflect something of this idea as he spells out the implications of the life of Jesus for the unity of humanity and divinity.

⁷³ Zizioulas, 'Capacity' p.431.

⁷⁴ Ware *The Orthodox Church* p.228-9.

⁷⁵ This is not to deny that the death of Christ is also a divine victory simply that 'it is a divine victory only because it is a human one'. Gunton, *Actuality of the Atonement*, p.59.

⁷⁶ MT p.135-155.

⁷⁷ Gunton *The Actuality of the Atonement* p.58 In this interpretation Zizioulas is closer to Edward Irving than Aulen.

⁷⁸ Travis in 'Christ as Bearer of divine Judgement' p. 343, discusses how both Old and New Testaments identify obedience with sacrifice.

The mere fact of incarnation overcomes the first obstacle to this union: the separation of the two natures, that of man and that of God. Two other obstacles then remain, linked to the fallen condition of man; sin and death...thus the death of Christ removes, from between man and God, the obstacle of sin; and his resurrection takes from death its 'sting'.⁷⁹

The truth of this perspective is that it ties the death of Christ in with the whole 'career' of Jesus of Nazareth rather than separating it out as the only significant event.

The difficulty with Zizioulas' emphasis upon Christ's victory is that his reticence to use the language of judgement, guilt and morality does leave us with an incomplete picture of the significance of the cross. First because the language of 'obedience' to the Father suggests an understanding of morality albeit a morality which is not simply psychological. (Once again we see that relations and justice are not mutually exclusive.) But secondly, the emphasis upon the victory of the humanity of Christ in his obedience unto death is only one part of the argument. The other issue which must be acknowledged is the role of God in dealing with the evil of the world. In looking to Lossky we see that he clearly states that Christ has dealt with the condition of all humanity. 'Fascinated by the *felix culpa*, we often forget that in breaking the tyranny of sin Our Saviour opens to us anew the way of deification, which is the final end of men.'⁸⁰ Yet, at this point Zizioulas is not as clear in identifying that the work of the Cross was how the corruption of the world has been dealt with. It is this issue which lies behind the concerns of Alan Torrance who believes that Zizioulas might be failing to establish the vicarious humanity of Christ.⁸¹ It was only the Godman who was able to accomplish the victory over the corruption of sin and the restoration and realisation of our hope of communion with God. We in turn participate in this victory only *in* Christ.⁸² Christ who is God was alone able to deal with the corruption of creation. In obedience to the Father and in the power of the Spirit he accomplished what was impossible for humanity. Yet, he was only able to do this because he was truly human. Jesus is 'not only a man but *the Man* in whom God has given *himself* to the world and for the world.'⁸³ We too pass through the

⁷⁹ OT p.92.

⁸⁰ MT p.134. And a conversation with Zizioulas on Oct. 21, 96.

⁸¹ Private conversation March 1998.

⁸² "Participation in Christ's death and resurrection" is a central theme in Paul's presentation of Christ's death and its effect on humanity. Travis, 'Christ as the Bearer of Divine Judgement' p.344.

⁸³ J. Torrance, 'The Vicarious Humanity of Christ' p.140.

'narrow gate' not simply because of what Christ has done but in what Christ has done.

The death of the Son of God is a judgement in that humanity has rejected the grace of God offered to the world in the deity of the person of Christ.⁸⁴ Thus in the incarnation we are in fact 'judged' in three senses: we are judged in that Christ reveals that true humanity is humanity in relation to God; secondly we are judged in that God's gracious and redemptive action towards us in the person of Christ means that our 'capacity' is not what we are in ourselves but what we are in relation to God; and finally we are judged in that we have rejected what God has offered to us in Christ. It is the rejection of Christ which reveals so clearly that the evil which has enslaved humanity has gone far beyond individual or psychological categories.⁸⁵ Jesus is rejected by a humanity which is unable to respond to him because of the power of sin in enslaving them/us. The death of Christ, the rejection of the grace of God extended towards us is the final and full indictment of humanity's refusal to live in the relationship which God had destined for it.

While Zizioulas illuminates some of the problems with the western understanding he has failed to adequately address the cosmic dimensions of the corruption which has occurred as a result of the fall. At issue is the actuality of the atonement: whether the real evil of the real world is faced and healed ontologically in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.⁸⁶ The various metaphors which attempt to explain the mystery of the cross are not comprehensive in themselves yet they do direct us to an appreciation that Christ's death on the cross did effect a change in the power of sin.

⁸⁴ 'The fact that Jesus the Son of God has suffered under the Jews and the heathen reveals -- and it alone does reveal -- evil in its reality. From this point alone can we grasp the fact, the extent, and the content of the impeachment of man. For the first time we are faced here with the root of all great and petty transgressions. So long as in all our sinning and our mutual guilt in great and petty ways we do not recognise this root and see ourselves accused in Christ's suffering, see ourselves again in that rebellion of man against God Himself, all knowledge or recognition of guilt is in vain.' Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* p.105.

⁸⁵ Gunton *Actuality of the Atonement* p.69.

⁸⁶ Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement*. p.165.

4.1. The Significance of Sin and its Implications for the Mode of Existence

Existentially sin also has significance, in part, to describe the process by which the biological hypostasis becomes an ecclesial hypostasis.⁸⁷ We do not want to see sin as simply a necessary 'aid',⁸⁸ leading us to the ecclesial hypostasis; nor do we want to see sin and the need to deal with sin as the only issue involved in becoming persons. But we do want to emphasise that sin and the ontological effects of sin mean that the recapitulation by Christ has not simply returned us to the original starting point but to a different path altogether. This path leads us to the same telos of full and unbroken communion with God but it is ultimately a very different route than it might have been. Knowing and accounting for that difference must be part of any theological anthropology.

We noted earlier that for Zizioulas the result of the fall is not a change in human nature but a change in the 'tropos' of human existence. This allows that when we choose to speak of the effects of sin, we will not be speaking of a change in the substance of humanity but in the dynamic matrix of human existence. The advantage of this approach is that it deals with the issue of how the sin of one person can affect the whole of creation, without having to adopt a complex metaphysics that attempts to explain how the substance of sin might be transmitted. We must quickly note that this need not undermine the significance of sin; rather, to do this without losing the ontological significance of sin we must be willing to move to an ontology which is relational. If we are to elaborate this idea we might say that all human relatedness, which is essential to our being in the ontological sense, is affected by the fact that humanity has closed itself off from the source of free relatedness in God. In this sense the ontological burden of sin might be established not simply on an individual level but on a societal

⁸⁷ 'The reconciliation of the persons enables the acknowledged evil of the past to become the basis for present and future good.' Gunton, *The Actuality of the Atonement* p.188.

⁸⁸ In the history of theology many thinkers have allowed sin a necessary and positive status in the development of humanity. Graham McFarlane 'Strange news from a distant star' in *Persons Divine and Human* eds. C. Schwoebel, C. Gunton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991) p. 112 quotes Irving 'It was necessary that Adam should pass into a fallen state, to shadow forth Christ in the fallen state, and to this very end was paradise created with all its ordinances.' Although McFarlane goes on to defend Irving in this position one is left with the apparent contradiction of his position. Cf. Tennent *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* p.64, 'Thus sin is, for Hegel, a necessary factor in the development of men. In this connection he often refers to the scriptural account of the fall, which he regards as a myth eternally realised in man and expressive of the mode in which he lives to be a person.'

level.⁸⁹ The significance of the 'individual' acts of sin are within the context of the corruption of the created world.

Sin will, inevitably, pass beyond the boundaries of the sinners' own life to burden all humanity and thus affect the fate of the whole world. The sin of our forefather Adam's was not the only sin of cosmic significance. Every sin, secret or manifest, committed by each of us, has a bearing on the rest of the universe.⁹⁰

What we must admit is that the fall has affected the whole of the created realm at all levels, not through a tainting of the static substance or gene pool of humanity but through a corruption of our relatedness. Each human person is born into a state of sin, not through their inherited genetic corruption but through being born into a world which is not oriented in its relatedness to God. That the effects of the corruption of sin have affected the created world at all levels including our genetic constitution is a *result* of our perversion of relations and not the *cause* of it.

One of the issues we noted in our critique of the western understanding of original sin at the beginning of this paper was its tendency to focus upon the individual and its failure to address the significance of sin for the whole of creation. The corruption of sin has cosmological significance. The relational matrix of the world is disordered and the work of Christ both enables and models our calling to be about healing this corruption. 'Forgiveness is therefore about being placed in a position -- in the life of the community -- where the evil past can be acknowledged while at the same time being used as a basis for a new form of life; where it can be atoned because it has been atoned'.⁹¹

Conclusion

Setting the doctrine of sin aside as we attempt to deal with the 'real' problem, which is the breakdown of communion with God, may help to see the issues in a fresh light. Nonetheless, we cannot deny that the issue of sin must be a formative part of any theological anthropology. Having established the direction of Zizioulas' argument and his very valid concern that we emphasise theosis over

⁸⁹ Several theologians in the past have suggested that sin should be viewed at the societal level without thereby negating the individual responsibility. 'He (Coleridge) saw like Kant, the necessity of grounding every man's sin in his will but he avoided the Pelagian and Kantian individualism by predicating sin of the race instead of the individual; and he admitted, like his master, that the origin of sin ultimately disappears in mystery' Tennent *The Origin and Propagation of Sin* p.59.

⁹⁰ Archimandrite Sophrony The Monk of Mount Athos. Quoted in *Christ and the Spirit*. McFarlane 1996 p. 110.

⁹¹ Gunton *The Actuality of the Atonement* p. 190.

redemption from sin, we are still left with the very real truth that sin is serious and that it is an essential part of our existence. The corruption arising from the fall is real and needs to be dealt with if we are to relate to God.

The doctrine of the fall establishes that humanity and creation as we now know them are not the way they were supposed to be. The 'substantial' effects of the fall cannot be identified with a change in the static protological substance of either human nature or with the world. Nonetheless, the corruption which has resulted from the fall remains a 'substantial' corruption which has radically altered what it means to be human in the present context. The primary source of the corruption of this world is the broken relationship with God; from this corruption arises the disordering of the relational matrix of the world. Christ, the God who became man, was rejected by a world which was held in the grip of a corruption that had permeated every level of creation; including our relations to each other and to the world around us. Thus it is the cross which reveals not only Christ's obedience to the Father (unto death) but it also reveals and judges the extent of the corruption which has resulted from human sinfulness. In Christ, and him alone, is realised the hope of restored and realised humanity. By his grace we too are able to enter into the relationship with the Father, not on our own but in and through Christ and by the Spirit.

Chapter Seven: The Dynamic Relations of Christ and the Spirit with Humanity.

Introduction

We have arrived at the point of pulling together some of the threads which we have worked with throughout this thesis. It is not our intention to reiterate what we have already discussed but to seek to apply some of the issues to the fundamental question of what it means to be a person whose *being* is located in relation to God. In the previous chapter we introduced the issue of the fall and identified the importance of addressing the implications of the fall for human corruption and for the corruption of the whole of creation through the disruption and disordering of humanity's relation with God. We have now arrived at the point of looking more closely at how a dynamic relational conception of God's being impacts the understanding of his involvement with humanity. There are three particular issues which we will concern ourselves with: they are the relation of Christ to the Church; the relation of Christ to the Spirit in the economy of God; and the relation of human persons to the Spirit.

1.1. Christ is the Church

Zizioulas makes a very clear identification of Christ with the Church. 'The Church is catholic only by virtue of her being... inseparably united with Christ and constituting his very presence in history.'¹ In this strong declaration of identity of the Church with Christ, Zizioulas takes a different position from other theologians including Lossky, Miroslov Volf, T.F. Torrance and Colin Gunton who are all concerned to emphasise that there must be a distinction between Christ and the Church.² These theologians suggest that the close identification of Christ with the Church must be qualified by enough space to allow for the humanity of the Church and the particularity of Christ. 'The Church is by analogy-and only by analogy, for the Church is not Christ -to be seen as the object of the Spirit's particularising of the action of the ascended Christ in the

1 BC p.160, cf. Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition' in *One in Christ*, 4 1988 p.297.

2 :Lossky utilises the bridal imagery to speak of the Church as distinct from Christ the Bridegroom. MT p.192. Miroslov Volf in *After Our Likeness; The Church as the Image of the Trinity*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1998), p.90, also uses the same image although with a much more central concern to overturn Zizioulas' whole model of ecclesiology which he identifies as a monistic subsuming of human personhood. 'Zizioulas ignores those particular New Testament metaphors underscoring the difference between Christ and the Church (e.g., the Church as bride or as flock).'

world.'³ These theologians suggest that at the same time one affirms the close relationship between Christ and the Church there must also be space for a distinction between the two.

In one of his more sweeping statements Zizioulas suggests that 'the insistence of certain people on a clear-cut distinction between Christ and the Church presupposes an individualistic understanding of Christ'.⁴ In fact, the discussion is not solely bound up with the question of personhood, for it appears as though what fuels the debate is the issue of the degree to which the Church, as we know it, truly reflects or lives its own identity. Therefore while looking at Zizioulas' understanding of how Christ's identity is bound up with the Church we must also look at the relationship of the Church as it now is, to the eschatological people of God.

When theologians such as T.F. Torrance call into question the identity between the Church and Christ one concern they are seeking to address is how the Church, as it exists in the present is to be understood.⁵ The institution of the Church cannot claim to be doing Christ's work or even representing Christ in all of its endeavors. Furthermore the recognition that institutions, including the Church, seem all too often, to denigrate or deny the very people they purport to serve, calls into question the relationship between Christ and the Church.

The protest against the Church as institution is to be heard on many lips: often, of course, for simplistic and individualistic reasons, but not only for that. Why is it, we may ask, that a faith at whose centre is the notion of freedom should have taken shape in the world in ways widely regarded as a threat to freedom?⁶

The institution of the Church seems to exist in a form which counters the possibility of the ideal of a free community. Clearly there must be some basis for speaking of the distinction between the institution of the Church and the eschatological hope for the Church. Not only does a distinction allow that the

3 Gunton, *Christ and Creation*. p. 110.

4 Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.299.

5 T.F.Torrance, *Royal Priesthood*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark 1993) pp.31-35, devotes a discussion of Christ as head of the body, to emphasise that the body has no identity apart from the head which is the ascended Christ. His emphasis is meant to affirm that while the church is directly identified with Christ and his saving work, it is not to be confused with Christ who remains distinct from it. He is concerned that too strong an identity of Christ with the church may be used to validate absolute authority on the part of church leadership.

6 Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians*. p.197.

Church is not what it should be but it also allows room for the Church to change.⁷

Miroslav Volf in *After Our Likeness* raises another issue when he criticises Zizioulas' strong identification of Christ with the Church. Volf is concerned that Zizioulas' emphasis upon the Church is in danger of placing the institution before the particular persons who make it up.⁸ The danger in his eyes is that the person is simply subsumed within the framework of the institution whose existence precedes them and is to all intents and purposes unaffected by them. Volf, recognising the threat posed by the Church, if it is perceived as an institution which precedes the persons who constitute it, seeks to move away from the institutional basis of the Church altogether. Thus he emphasises the distinction rather than the relation between the Church as an institution and the Church as the body of Christ. Volf notes that the Church is nothing more than the *collection* of people, united by the Spirit, who together form the Church. The *event* of the gathering of the people is the true Church, the true community.

Zizioulas' notion of the corporate Christ provides the contours for his identification of Christ with the Church. We do not have the space to go into a full discussion of his notion of the corporate Christ at this point.⁹ (It has already been discussed by Paul McPartlan in *The Eucharist Makes the Church*.) However, we will raise a few issues. Zizioulas' conception of the corporate Christ is twofold: first, that Christ's identity is never understood apart from the Father and the Spirit;¹⁰ and secondly that Christ is never understood apart from the human persons who constitute the Church.¹¹ In both cases the premise of Zizioulas' thesis is that in God the conflict between the one and the many is overcome in a relational being which does not deny particularity but actually makes particularity possible. The one does not in this way take precedence over the many. The notion of the corporate Christ allows Zizioulas to say that it is the

7 Christoph Schwobel, 'The Creature of the Word: Recovering the Ecclesiology of the Reformers' in *On Being the Church; Essays on the Christian Community*, eds. Gunton and Schwobel (T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1989), p.152.

8 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p.106.

9 We should note that Zizioulas does not use the notion of the corporate Christ as a substitute for the notion of the Church as the body of Christ, for he uses both images at different times. *BC* p.111

10 'The identification of the Church's ministry with that of Christ is possible only if we let our Christology be conditioned pneumatologically.' *BC* p.212.

11 'Christ considered apart from the church is the worse kind of individualism.' Zizioulas 'Capacity' p.435.

way in which Christ is the Church that allows space for humanity and particularity. When he refuses to allow for a distinction between Christ and the Church it is because the Church has no hypostasis of its own.¹² This should not be taken to mean that the persons who together constitute the Church lose their particularity; the whole thrust of Zizioulas' project is to speak of relations which allow rather than deny particularity. Nonetheless we would agree with Volf insofar as Zizioulas' thesis could use a more clear affirmation of the distinction between the ascended Christ and the persons who constitute the Church.

Surprisingly Volf's reference to the Church as event has echoes in Zizioulas' thought and his emphasis upon the Church as event. Furthermore, Zizioulas is not naive with regard to the problems of the institutional Church. With his work towards ecumenism he is more aware than most people of the problems that the institutional Church struggles with. So how does Zizioulas understand the Church? Space does not permit us to fully explore the ecclesiological issues which are involved.¹³ However, we need to look more closely at two issues; his understanding of the eschatological orientation of the Church and his understanding of the Church as event.

1.2. Eschatological Orientation

When Zizioulas suggests that the Church is perfect he is not by that idealising the Church.¹⁴

The Church is made of sinners, and she shares fully the ontological and cosmic dimensions of sin which is death, the break of communion and final *diastasis* (separation and decomposition) of beings, And yet, we insist that the Church is in her essence holy and sinless.¹⁵

The Church exists as the paradox of a community which is still very much in the world yet, with an identity which is eschatological. It is the way Zizioulas

12' 'By being the *eikon* of the Kingdom the Church is at the same time maximalised and minimalised. She is maximalised in that he will definitely survive eternally when her true identity will be revealed in the Parousia. And she is minimalised in that she has no *hypostasis* of her own but draws her identity from Christ and the Kingdom to come. By existing in history "in persona Christi", she is guaranteed the glory and eternal life of her head. But for the very same reason she is no autonomous entity vis-a-vis either Christ or the Kingdom. Her existence is iconic.' Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.300.

13 McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, pp. 265-273 explores these issues in more detail.

14 Nor is Zizioulas proposing an over-realised eschatology as suggested by Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p.102.

15 Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness', p. 351.

understands the eschatological orientation of the Church that allows for the failures of the Church.

Quite often she is tempted herself, either for the sake of survival or for the fulfillment of her mission, to adjust so much to the world as to forget that her true citizenship is in heaven and her identity is not drawn from history but from the *eschata*: she is what she will be.¹⁶

For Zizioulas the statement that the Church is perfect is not to claim that there is no need of transformation. Quite the opposite in fact, the Church is called to continually live towards its true identity. He is insisting that the church's identity is not located in what it 'is' but in what it will be.

When we speak of the importance of eschatology we sometimes think of it as the end of the Church's pilgrimage, I suggest that we must think of the *eschata* as the beginning of the Church's life, the arche, that which brings forth the Church, gives her identity, sustains and inspires her in her existence.¹⁷

For Zizioulas locating the identity of the Church eschatologically is a vital step in understanding what the Church 'is'.

Too strongly asserting an eschatological orientation can lead to a denial of the historical institution. Human institutions may fail to reflect the free involvement of God in the world but they are an inevitable aspect of our human sociality and to deny that the Church is in some ways an institution does seem to deny the humanity of the Church.¹⁸ Zizioulas avoids this pitfall by allowing 'no room for the slightest distinction between the worshipping eucharistic community on earth and the actual worship in front of God's throne'.¹⁹ Zizioulas is careful to speak of the Church as a eucharistic community rather than an institution. Nonetheless while he has chosen to speak of the close connection between the eucharistic community on earth and the eschatological community he is not denying the connection between the eucharistic community and the institution of the Church. What he does call into question is the way in which the institution might be understood to make the claim of being the Church. Unlike Volf Zizioulas seeks to affirm the relation between the institution and the true Church; he accomplishes this through his understanding of the event of the eucharist.²⁰

16 Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.300.

17 Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition'. p.296.

18 'Now, without doubt the Church needs to be an institution in the sense that it must -- theologically must -- be a historically given reality.' Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians*. p.198.

19 BC p.233.

20 'I can say that for the Orthodox the Church is not an institution but an event -- which sounds Protestant to Roman Catholic ears. Or I can say the opposite, namely that the Church is an

1.3. The Event of the Eucharist

Although this thesis has considered Zizioulas' understanding of 'being as communion' it has not explored the relationship between 'communion' and the celebration of the eucharist. Space does not allow us to do justice to the full extent of his understanding of the eucharist, nonetheless it is necessary to at least briefly explore its significance. For Zizioulas, the eucharist is the realisation in the present of the future hope of true communion between creation and the creator which is grounded upon the history of that engagement.²¹ In Zizioulas' thought the eucharist is the central sacrament of the Church because it is the eschatological realisation of the future hope of communion in God's presence, 'being as communion'. To speak of the concept of communion is to speak abstractly of what is concretely realised in the eucharist. 'The eucharist is nothing less than the reality which makes it possible for us to exist at all.'²²

The eucharist is the event in which the Church as institution and the Church as the body of Christ become one reality.²³ Emphasising the importance of the eucharist as an event does not avoid the tendency towards qualifying the Church through institutional criteria. When Zizioulas suggests that '[I]f the Eucharist is not celebrated *properly*, the Church ceases to be the Church'²⁴ it might appear as though he is proposing certain criteria to determine the authenticity of how the eucharistic celebration is conducted. Yet, Zizioulas' focus is upon the eucharistic community in which the eucharistic celebration takes place rather than a particular form or structure to the celebration.²⁵

It is in the eucharist, understood properly as a community and not as a 'thing', that Christ is present here and now as the one who realises God's self-communication to creation as communion with his life and in the existential form of a concrete community created by the Spirit.²⁶

institution and not an event -- which would cause total confusion to the ecumenical listener.' Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.294.

21 '[T]he Church unites in the Eucharist the two dimensions, past and future, simultaneously as one indivisible reality. This happens "sacramentally", i.e. in and through historical and material forms, while the existential tension between the "already" and the "not yet" is preserved.' BC, p. 188.

22 McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, p. 270.

23 'For the Eucharist is perhaps the only reality in the Church which is at once an institution and an event.' BC p. 206.

24 Zizioulas, 'Communion and Otherness'. p.355 My italics.

25 Zizioulas distinguishes his position from that of Afanasiyev to avoid 'the opinion that eucharistic ecclesiology is founded simply on the concept or on the celebration of a sacramental act'. BC p. 23.

26 BC p. 213-214.

Furthermore while Zizioulas affirms that the eucharistic community can truly realise its eschatological hope it does so only momentarily. 'The mystery of the Church does not involve a conflict between *Amt* and *Geist*, institution and event, as long as all institutions draw their justification from the event of the celebration of the Kingdom in each place'.²⁷ Zizioulas' position serves to take the emphasis off the historical institution of the Church as the source of its legitimation and calls it to reaffirm continually its constitution in the communion event.²⁸

The Church is called to be a different mode of existence, a free inclusivity which continually breaks into the fixed 'closed' structures of our societies including its own institutionalism.²⁹ Any particular institution which makes a claim to be the Church of Christ must also admit that it is so only in part and that it fails to be what it should be. Therefore the Church does not affirm its identity from tradition but from the event in which it realises its eschatological hope.

[T]he only way to preserve the eschatological identity is the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and the encounter of the Word, not as a message coming to her as passed through channels of historical experience, but as an echo of the future state of things. She is obliged to live by faith not by sight.³⁰

A local community can only call itself a Church in the faith and hope that it is God which makes it so.³¹ In seeking to define what the Church should be it does so not as a measure of its efficacy but in the desire to know and grow into the fullness of its calling.

27 Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition' p.301.

28 '[B]y stressing the fact that God's being consists in community it asserts the theological priority of community over institution or anything impersonal. (The church has always behaved her worst when she has likened herself to an empire or understood herself as primarily a legal institution). The church must cease to be looked on primarily as an institution and be treated as a way of being.' Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of God the Trinity' p.29 Agreeing with this approach it is still important to qualify what is meant by community given the fact that it is all too easy to see communities themselves as institutions rather than in the dynamic event sense which Zizioulas is directing us towards.

29 Lossky also wants to maintain the uniqueness of the Church in so far as it is defined as distinct from any solely human institution. *MT* p.175 However he does not suggest the eschatological determination in the same way as Zizioulas does.

30 Zizioulas, 'The Mystery of the Church in the Orthodox Tradition', p.300.

31 'According to the Reformers we can only hope that God will use our human actions and institutions which can do nothing but witness to God's work for achieving his work in creating his church.' Schwoebel, 'The Creature of the Word', p.150. Zizioulas makes this hope more concrete by pointing towards the eucharist.

2.1. Christ and the Spirit, the Two Hands of God

Zizioulas avoids the determinism which a close identification between Christ and the Church might suggest by clearly defining the work of the Spirit in the constituting the Church. Zizioulas' whole conception of the Corporate Christ can only make sense in the context of the work of the Spirit in relation to Christ.³² The Church allows space for humanity to encounter God because the concrete historical institution in Christ is balanced by the eschatological constitution in the Spirit.³³ In Zizioulas' definition of the constitution of the Church we are pointed towards a Church that is in fact nothing more than the persons who, in Christ and together with the Spirit, make it up.³⁴ What Zizioulas has done is to allow that the unity of the Church is continually realised and effected not through its identification in continuity with its tradition, but through the dynamic event of the Spirit uniting people in Christ. The roles of the Son and Spirit in the life of the body of Christ are distinct yet not separate. They together realise the Church.

As the Son institutes the Church -- gives it immanent historical existence -- it is the function of the Spirit to constitute it, to free it from institutionalism. As Zizioulas points out, without some such distinction the tendency is to regard the Spirit as rather like the fuel for a vehicle.³⁵

That the Spirit again and again constitutes the Church as what it will be, means that the Church is the Church not solely by virtue of its confessional stance, nor by its historic continuity, but through its constitution in the Spirit. This does not mean that the continuity with the tradition is not important, nor does it mean that the confession of the Church is not important; what it does mean is that the Church is authentically the Church in so far as it realises its identity in relation to its eschatological hope; a hope which is realised in and with the historical and eschatological person of Christ.

When Zizioulas proposes his particular understanding of the relations of Christ and the Spirit he recognises that the whole area of the relation of Christ to the Spirit and the Spirit to Christ remains a contentious issue.³⁶ This is hardly

32 BC p.130. We would suggest that Zizioulas needs to be more consistent in his affirmation of the role of the Spirit in the context of the Corporate Christ if he is to avoid Volf's charge of a tendency towards monism.

33 Zizioulas, 'Doctrine of God the Trinity Today', p.28.

34 'The celebration of the Eucharist by the primitive Church was, above all, the gathering of the people of God ἐπὶ το αὐτό, that is, both the manifestation and the realisation of the Church.' BC p. 21.

35 Gunton *Theology Through the Theologians*. P.199.

36 BC p.123.

surprising given the implications it has for understanding how God engages with the world and ultimately, for our purposes in this paper, how humanity is understood to be in relation to God. There are some who posit a Spirit-Christology which in some instances goes so far as to collapse the Spirit into the person of Christ.³⁷ On the other pole is posited a complete separation of the work of the Son and the Spirit as is evidenced in some aspects of the Protestant tradition. Splitting apart the *two hands* of God has allowed the Church to apply the work of the Son and the Spirit in different ways to the human situation. However, this distinction easily lacks coherence if it becomes a disjunction. In order to understand the significance of Zizioulas' eucharistic theology in terms of the relation of Christ and the Spirit we will compare his model with those of Lossky and Volf. This comparison will inevitably lead us into the discussion of how the Spirit is understood to engage with human persons.

2.2. Lossky on Christ and the Spirit.

Returning briefly to Lossky's understanding of the relationship of Christ to the Spirit we will see a very different conception from what we have glimpsed of Zizioulas' model. Lossky's theological anthropology involves a developed notion of the work of Christ and the Spirit. He seeks to maintain the common focus and unity of their work, yet he insists on the independence of the two persons to the point that he posits two economies.³⁹ 'Intimately linked as they are in the common work upon earth, the Son and the Holy Spirit remain nevertheless in this same work two persons *independent* the one of the other as to their hypostatic being'.⁴⁰ The independence of the persons should not be taken to say that the work of the Son and Spirit remain detached from each other.⁴¹ By maintaining the independence of the persons of the Son and the Spirit while insisting on the unity of their work, Lossky seeks to remind us of the different facets of God's operation *ad extra*.

Lossky's concern is to establish that the two divine persons engage with human persons in different ways. The Son deals with the material relation of human

37 Mackay's binitarian model is one example. See Del Colle, *Christ and the Spirit*. p.148.

Gunton, *Theology through the Theologians*. p.106.

39 Thus the titles of two chapters of *MT*, 'The Economy of the Son' and 'The Economy of the Spirit'.

40 *MT* p. 159 (italics mine) The idea of the distinction of the persons as to their hypostatic being is a problem in itself, as we have discussed earlier in this thesis.

41 'The work of the Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit are therefore inseparable.' *MT* p.167.

unity, the union of human nature, while the Spirit is the one who affords the *personal* and *spiritual* relation to God. Lossky suggests that it is Christ who institutes the Church in transforming human nature to provide a new human nature which the individual may enter into through baptism. The path to the realisation of personhood follows on from that gift of the new nature through a person growing in ever closer communion or union with the Spirit. For Lossky the unity in the Church is the basis by which a person may transcend human nature to a true identity in a personal relation to the Spirit. Although it is the Son who is clearly united with the Church, Lossky affirms that the Spirit operates within the Church. In fact there is a place for the Spirit even in the institution of the Church. The Spirit's role in unifying the Church is only the *first* communication of the Spirit, when the Spirit was breathed out by Christ, and it is not to be confused with the *second* communication of the Spirit which is the seal of personal and unique relationship to God.⁴² Nonetheless Lossky's understanding leads to some concerns with how the Son and Spirit are seen to be united in their personhood and in their operations. We would not take issue with the idea that the Spirit is 'communicated' in a different way after the ascension, but with how the Spirit is seen to engage with the human person and from that how the work of the Spirit and the work of Christ are united.

3.1. Indwelling?

Central to Lossky's understanding of the work of the Spirit is the union of the human person with God. His concern to maintain the independence of the two persons, the Son and the Spirit, is mirrored in his care in emphasising the integrity of the particular. To describe this in the life of the human being Lossky speaks of an inner unity with God.

The Christian mystic, on the other hand, entering into himself and enclosing himself in the 'inner chamber' of his heart, finds there, deeper even than sin, the beginning of an ascent in the course of which the universe appears more and more unified, more and more coherent, penetrated with spiritual forces and forming one whole within the hand of God.⁴³

We must carefully qualify that Lossky's intention is not to suggest that the turn inward is to discover oneself nor is it solely introspection for it would appear to be, by definition, the engagement with another person. For Lossky the turn inward is to ascend to God through the energies of uncreated grace which the

⁴² MT p.167-68.

⁴³ MT p.106.

Spirit gives to the person in the Church.⁴⁴ However, the question is in what way does the Spirit engage with us? Is it through an inner and private union, or perhaps through vitalising an inner capacity to relate to God? Lossky's clear suggestion is that the work of the Spirit involves a transformation of our inwardness.

[T]he soul is not in itself subject to passions, but becomes so when it leaves its interior simplicity and exteriorises itself. Renunciation of the world is thus a re-entering of the soul into itself, a concentration, a reintegration of the spiritual being in its return to communion with God.⁴⁵

Lossky does not intend that this inward transformation should remain private, without implications for our life among other people although it begins in a private encounter.⁴⁶

In love directed towards God each human person finds his perfection; nevertheless, individual persons cannot arrive at perfection without the realisation of the fundamental unity of human nature. Love of God is necessarily bound up with love of one's fellow-man.⁴⁷

For Lossky our inner relation to God should not come at the expense of our relation to the world. On the contrary it is only through this inner 'union' that we are able to relate properly to the world. Our concern which we will seek to trace out in the argument which follows is that there remains a dichotomy between the inner and outer person (which correlates with the work of the 'independent' persons of the Son and the Spirit) as though the inner or true centre of the human person remains in some way free from or disconnected from the outer person.⁴⁸ It appears that the work of the Spirit is to allow the inner person to transcend the outer self, or union of nature. Clearly Lossky sees that a central aspect of our union with God is to bring about the union of the inner and outer person; our argument however is that while the functioning of the person as a psychosomatic unity may be disjointed as a result of the fall this should not be taken to mean that there are 'inner' and 'outer' elements to the person.

44 '[T]he way of the created persons, on the other hand, must be that of ascent, a rising up towards the divine nature by means of union with uncreated grace communicated by the Holy Spirit.' *MT* p 215.

45 *MT* p. 200.

46 'The Spirit is present with everyone who receives Him as if there were but one receiver, but bestows sufficient and complete grace on all.' *MT* p.166.

47 *MT* p 214.

48 'The spirit the highest part of the human creature, is that contemplative faculty by which man is able to seek God. The most personal part of man, the principle of his conscience and of his freedom, the spirit (vous) in human nature corresponds most nearly to the person; it might be said that it is the seat of the person.' *MT* p.201.

3.2. 'Interiority'

Miroslav Volf, in *After Our Likeness*, provides another approach to this debate. Similarly to both Lossky and Zizioulas, Volf seeks to use the doctrine of the Trinity to describe theological anthropology particularly in the context of ecclesiology. Central to his thesis is a conception of the perichoresis of the Trinity as mutual 'interiority'. He correlates this interiority to humanity through locating the work of the Spirit primarily with the interiority of the person.⁴⁹ His position appears to resonate with Lossky's notion of the 'inner' relation to God of the 'individual' person and is reflected in his criticism of Zizioulas' suggestion that the Spirit does not indwell individuals. In Volf's thesis we see something closely akin to Lossky's insistence upon the Spirit's 'private' relationship with the individual believer. He suggests that the only way in which the human community can in some degree 'participate' in the divine perichoresis is through the interiority of the Spirit in the life of the individual believer.⁵⁰ This is why Volf can insist that '*the unity of the Church is grounded in the interiority of the Spirit*'.⁵¹ In spite of the significant differences between Volf and Lossky, there remains the basic assumption that the Spirit works in union with the 'individual' person. Particularity is located in the private relation of the Spirit to the person. Both Volf and Lossky would argue that community is very important yet they would also assert that it is through the individual's relationship with God that the individual is set free to create community.⁵²

Fergus Kerr has engaged with the thought of Wittgenstein (in *Theology After Wittgenstein*), who is recognised as one of the great antagonists to the concept of the inner self. Kerr uses Wittgenstein's ideas to attack the concept of inwardness in the Christian tradition. 'Kerr's claim [is] that Spirituality understood as inwardness is a consequence of a philosophically false and existentially inadequate picture of the human being as an individual related in the first instance to its (inner) self'.⁵³ Kerr is not simply arguing against the idea that by

49 Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p. 208-13 In this he is clearly holding with what has been identified as the 'Reformation's concern to liberate the Spirit from the control of the ecclesiastical institution'. Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians*, p.108.

50 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p.208-13.

51 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p.213 Italics in the original.

52 Volf, represents an understanding of the Spirit which is often found in the Protestant tradition. 'Within the Protestant tradition there has been a tendency 'to stress the function of the Spirit as the awakener of the individual.' Wesley Carr, 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit' in *SJT* 28, 1975 p. 510.

53 Adrian Thatcher, 'Spirituality Without Inwardness'. *SJT* 46, 1996, p.221.

looking inward we will understand ourselves, he is arguing against any notion of 'looking inwards' at all. It is the idea that there is an 'independent' interiority to the individual, rooted in Cartesian thought, which Kerr and other thinkers are concerned with. The target of Kerr's thought is the seductive idea that in our thinking we can be truly free from outside influence, that we can disengage from the relations to the world and to people around us to the extent that we can enter into reflection in a truly objective manner. Not only does Wittgenstein's work discount the whole tradition arising from Descartes, it also deprecates the vein in the Christian tradition, which may be traced all the way back to Augustine, which has held that we will discover something about God and ourselves through a turn inwards.

The notion of the independent inner self is clearly evident in Lossky's theology.⁵⁴ Lossky, who, paradoxically, was concerned with a practical and engaged Christianity, claims that there is the possibility of a person isolating themselves to the degree that they are able to operate objectively. Lossky's proposal of an inner objective realm remains a popular notion. 'The fallacy that there is an inner private self to the person is one which is difficult to displace.'⁵⁵ We would argue that human persons are irreducibly interdependent not only in terms of our physical dependence upon each other but also in terms of our constitution in the matrix of existence. The possibility of a truly objective stance denies the situatedness of the human person.

A difference between Lossky and Zizioulas shows up in their understanding of interiority. Zizioulas in rejecting any tendency within the tradition to look for an inner mystical union with God suggests that St. Augustine introduced

a dimension that was bound to create a dichotomy within Western Christianity ever since, namely the importance of introspectiveness, of consciousness and the inner man, from which sprang the important mystical, romantic and pietistic movements of the Christian West.⁵⁶

Zizioulas has here clearly rejected an emphasis upon introspection and by implication called into question the notion of a dualism between the inner and outer persons. He is clearly opposed to any notion of 'inner' union with God.

54 *I&L* p.193 -94.

55 'The age old dream is repeating itself: thinking is something better done independently of bodiliness, in some clear and pure zone, beyond time and space, into which our muzzy heads rarely rise. The desire to think away our incarnate nature remains as seductive as ever in our culture.' Fergus Kerr, *Theology After Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1986) p. 186.

56 John Zizioulas, *Lambeth Conference Address*, Sourozh Feb. 1989 p. 30.

Similar observations may be made for spirituality and piety. There is a tendency towards mysticism among many Christians which would either direct the soul towards a personal relationship with Jesus and especially his humanity, a kind of Christo-monistic piety, or else involve a kind of absorption of the soul into the very divine essence, a sort of loss of the self in the love of the divine. In both cases the Trinity is irrelevant.⁵⁷

The rejection of a notion of interiority is not developed to any great length in Zizioulas' thought for he is primarily concerned to emphasise the corporate nature of our relationship with God. He does not utilise Wittgenstein's argument against the idea of an independent interiority to the person.⁵⁸ Rather, in his rejection of individualism he is primarily concerned to emphasise that persons are irreducibly relational. Zizioulas' opposition to an emphasis upon interiority is grounded in his eucharistic theology and echoed in his downplaying the role of cognition in human personhood.

3.3. Cognition

Volf suggests that the lack of the expression of a cognitive element in the theology of Zizioulas means that there is not a basis by which we might understand how a human person responds to God's initiative.

Zizioulas' description of union with Christ, however, maintains no activity on the side of human beings, not even receptive activity made possible by God. For if human beings were to participate actively in this union, their activity would have to be accompanied by cognition.⁵⁹

We would agree with Volf in so far as there are times when Zizioulas' reaction against psychological categories or the self consciousness of the individual are too dismissive. However, Volf has mistakenly assumed that in Zizioulas' model there is no room for initiative on the part of the person.⁶⁰ In the wider context of Zizioulas' thought there is a place for cognition. It is not that cognition cannot play a role in relation to a person's entry into the Church, but that cognition is not finally *determinative* of ontology. Zizioulas allows that a person may choose to enter into the Church or someone else may choose for them and although he would not see this choice as simply a rational choice there is clearly room in his conception to see some element of cognition in the entry of a person into the

57 Zizioulas, *The Doctrine of God the Trinity Today*. p.21.

58 Rowan Williams, 'Review of Being as Communion' *SJT* 42 p.103, suggests that there would be benefits to comparing Zizioulas' thesis with some of Wittgenstein's ideas.

59 Volf, *After Our Likeness* p.96.

60 'This is why human beings, once having become persons in Christ, do not have a choice whether to remain such; the possibility of saying "no" would mean that personhood is constituted not through communion, but rather through the individual.' Volf, *After Our Likeness* p.96.

community. For Zizioulas a singular emphasis upon the cognitive element is to confuse the question of being or ontology with a capacity that is shared by other creatures in this world.⁶¹ The belief in the centrality of the cognitive ability, in determining our 'being', is part of the basis for Zizioulas' reaction against the concept of 'inwardness'.

The whole argument about the role of the rational capacity in determining ontology is wrapped up in the emphasis upon choice and the freedom of choice in self-determination.⁶² This causes us to question whether or not there is, underlying Volf's and indeed Lossky's emphases, a presupposition which suggests that the locus of personal identity is the human cognitive capacity. We would take issue not primarily with the recognition of the importance of the cognitive ability but with the temptation to separate out cognition from our relations.

[O]ur thinking not only shapes but is shaped by our whole socially participative and semantically molded apperception. Our proper functioning at the cognitive level is thus inseparable from our social participation and communal being.⁶³

The dislocation of cognition is evidenced in Lossky's and Volf's failure to establish relations as that which both constitutes and exists 'between' persons.⁶⁴ As we discussed in chapters three and five allowing for the scope of the constitutive role of relations is vital to deal with the reality of human existence.

There is certainly no reason to allow the cognitive ability the elevated status which it has enjoyed in many western soteriological models. However, we would suggest that as a component of the human person's constitution as a

61 Zizioulas argues that cognition is not part of determining 'personhood'. His argument to support this is that humanity shares its cognitive ability with some animals. While we would agree that it is important to move away from some of the western models which have confused cognition with ontology we find Zizioulas' argument somewhat strange at this point. In effect he is reversing the traditional arguments in favour of identifying the rational capacity with ontology. By suggesting that the rational capacity does not distinguish humanity from the rest of creation, he argues that it cannot be the basis of ontology. We would prefer to question the emphasis upon cognition (either positive or negative emphasis) by utilising the point Colin Gunton raises with regard to the same issue which is that what lies behind this argument is a confusion of the comparative and ontological questions. See chapter Three Section 1.2.

62 Volf, *After Our Likeness*, p.97, in criticising Zizioulas reveals exactly how the notion of choice and cognitive capacity are often seen as the central elements of what it means to be a person. 'Choice, however, is a characteristic not of the person, but rather of the individual, and derives from the fall. Is this non reflected movement toward communion anthropologically plausible? I think not'.

63 A.Torrance, *Persons in Communion*, p.99.

64 McFadyen, *The Call to Personhood*, uses the notion of 'betweenness' which helps to clearly establish that the notion of relations we are speaking of is not an interiority.

psychosomatic unity it does or can play a significant role in determining whether or not a person lives in communion with God.⁶⁵ Our concern with Zizioulas' thesis is not that he allows no space for the rational capacity in his understanding of humanity, but that, in his defence of his model there are times when he can deny the place or importance of cognition in human constitution; although this denial is clearly a polemic of his argument rather than its foundation. Zizioulas is so concerned to denigrate individualism, that he can fail to allow for the role of cognition. While we would agree that the Western focus upon cognition has distorted theological thinking, we would maintain that it is a vital element in human personhood. Just as we would not isolate the cognitive capacity of the person as the 'ghost in the machine', to echo Gilbert Ryle's phrase, so we would not allow that the cognitive capacity plays no role in the determination of the person. We will return now to consider the role of the Spirit in the relation of humanity to God, for the understanding of how the Spirit engages with humanity is central to this issue.

3.4. Indwelling Spirit

Zizioulas is adamantly opposed to the notion of an individual union with the Spirit. 'When the Holy Spirit blows, He does not create good individual Christians, individual "saints", but an event of communion, which transforms everything the Spirit touches into a relational being'.⁶⁶ McPartlan notes that Zizioulas interprets the biblical references to the indwelling of the Spirit as references to the Spirit indwelling the community.⁶⁷ When we review the biblical texts it is apparent that the bulk of them are not speaking of the Spirit indwelling an individual but of the Spirit indwelling the community. Yet, 1 Corinthians 6:16- 20 clearly speaks of the idea of the Spirit indwelling the individual.⁶⁸ Therefore we must not discount the idea of the indwelling

65 David S. Cunningham 'Review of Persons in Communion' in *Modern Theology* Vol. 14, no.1 Jan. 1998 p. 156, defends Zizioulas understanding of the cognitive capacity by suggesting that 'for Zizioulas (as for Orthodoxy generally), cognition is necessarily a knowing-with (co-gnoscere) in which God is always present'.

66 Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness* p.354.

67 McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church* p. 278-279. In private conversation, February 1997, Zizioulas affirmed his reticence to support the idea of 'indwelling' due to the individualistic overtones it carries with it.

68 'The first text is 1Cor 6:19-20 where Paul reapplies to the individual believer's body the temple imagery that elsewhere refers to the Church corporately. Here is the certain evidence that Paul understood the presence motif of the Old Testament, which Isaiah 63: 9-14 has already equated with the Holy Spirit, to be fulfilled in the life of the individual believer as well as in the gathered community of believers.' Gordon Fee, *God's Empowering Presence : the Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul*. (Massachusetts: Hendrickson 1994) p. 868-69 'God not only 'dwells' in the midst of his

presence of the Spirit altogether. The question we must ask is, how is the indwelling of the Spirit to be understood?

More recently Zizioulas has modified or clarified his position on the notion of indwelling.⁶⁹ Primarily he is seeking to identify the work of the Spirit with the creation of communion.⁷⁰ He is not opposed to the notion of the Spirit's indwelling a person but this is not to say that the Spirit indwells an individual. Lossky, Volf and Zizioulas agree that the Spirit creates communion and community yet, where Lossky and Volf suggest that this happens through an interior union with individuals Zizioulas insists that it is more complex than that. The result of the Spirit's engaging with human persons is the transcendence of their brokenness to transform their relations with others in the Church, to become persons. The Spirit works in many different ways to bring about the unity of the Church yet a coherent account of the work of the Spirit, given the situatedness of human beings, must allow that the Spirit works *in our midst* rather than *inside* us.⁷¹ We would not disagree with Volf that the Spirit may in some way challenge the individual person and draw them into the Church; however, we do take issue with the idea that this is the only way or even the primary way that the Spirit works.

The emphasis upon the Spirit creating communion is not Zizioulas' only concern; there remains the issue of how the person of the Spirit is understood as well.

The Spirit seems to have an obsession with freedom. He blows where he wills, and does not like to be told what to do. We must certainly try, and we must definitely do our best, but when we pray for the Spirit to come we must be prepared for the unexpected.⁷²

Where today many people use the freedom of the Spirit as grounds for seeing the liberty of the Spirit to work independently of the economy of the Son, Zizioulas refers to the Spirit's freedom to maintain that we cannot contain or control the

people by the Spirit, but that has likewise taken up residence in the lives of his people individually, as they are indwelt by the life giving Spirit.' Ibid p.845.

69 King's College, London summer seminar discussion. July 1998.

70 '[T]here is no kingdom of God outside the work of the Holy Spirit, who is by definition communion.' BC p.205.

71 'In theory there should be no tension between the individual and the community. In practice, however, such a tension must be recognised, for it is due to insufficient recognition being given to the provisionality both of the community's life and the individual's experience.' Carr 'Towards a Contemporary Theology of the Holy Spirit' pp.514-15.

72 Zizioulas, 'Come Holy Spirit Sanctify Our Lives' *Sourozh*, 44 1991 p.1.

Spirit.⁷³ The notion of the Spirit indwelling the individual might be taken to mean that the Spirit becomes the possession of the individual as though the Spirit were a force or a power the individual might use.⁷⁴ Zizioulas' emphasis reminds us that the Spirit is not *something* that we should take casually or take for granted; the Spirit is not a force which we might utilise. We would qualify Zizioulas' emphasis upon the freedom of the Spirit to avoid suggesting that the Spirit exercises his freedom in an arbitrary way. The Spirit does not simply respond passively to our demands, yet in his *consistent* presence with us the freedom of the Spirit is exercised in responding to and constituting our lives in Christ. Therefore this 'unexpectedness' is not because the Spirit blows where he wills and therefore appears when he wants; but because, although the Spirit remains in relation to us, it is the relation of a person and not a force; by which we mean that the Spirit encounters us as a centre of action.⁷⁵ While we can, and should, expect the Spirit's involvement in our lives we must never forget that the Spirit encounters us as another, as a person.⁷⁶ The Spirit is never 'possessed' by an individual or by the Church: while it is possible to relate to the Spirit, this relation is always personal which does not mean 'private' or individual.

Agreeing with Zizioulas' reaction against the Spirit's relation remaining private or interior, we would, nonetheless, suggest that the Spirit's encounter with the human person is central to their 'spiritual' life. This is not however a 'private' encounter just as nothing about a person is truly private. Rather it is a 'personal' encounter in which the Spirit enters into the matrix of constitutive relations which form the 'content' of a person. It might appear as though disavowing an interior relation with the Spirit is to deny the possibility of 'personal' relationship with God. It is important, therefore to be clear in describing what we mean by 'personal' relations. Personal relations are often understood as an exclusive relation between two individuals who in reciprocal dialogue are focused

73 The term 'freedom' carries a lot of connotations which are not helpful to the point that Zizioulas is endeavouring to make. As a result Zizioulas' statement does not appear to reflect the way the Spirit engages with us nor does it reflect the way in which the Spirit operates as one of the three persons of the Trinity.

74 Lossky guards against understanding the Spirit as a force to be utilised by humanity by maintaining that the Spirit engages with us through the uncreated energies. While this might guard us from understanding the Spirit as a force it leaves us with other problems in understanding how God engages with us and how we are to understand the notion of the person as we have already discussed in chapter four of this thesis.

75 Gunton makes this same point in *Theology Through the Theologians*, p.116.

76 Thus for Paul, the Spirit is not some merely impersonal 'force' or 'influence' or 'power'. The Spirit is none other than the fulfillment of the promise that God himself would once again be present with his people. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence* p.845.

primarily on each other. The model of relation which we want to emphasise is not to deny the possibility of entering into dialogue with another particular but to deny that this dialogue is *exclusive*. Therefore when we speak of the Spirit guiding us we are not speaking of turning inward to encounter the Spirit in the inner self. The work of the Spirit in the life of a person is to engage with them as another, as a person and as such to work to transform the matrix of relations within which they are constituted.

3.5. The Transcendence of the Spirit

Zizioulas makes an important point when he insists that the Spirit remains transcendent, yet this only makes sense in the context of the Son's immanent entry into the world.⁷⁷ Where the Son has entered into the world as Jesus of Nazareth, the Spirit remains other than the world.⁷⁸ The Spirit does not become part of the matrix of creation in the same way as Christ has, for he remains transcendent, yet, this is not to deny that the Spirit engages with us 'personally'.⁷⁹ This transcendence does not mean that the Spirit remains spatially dislocated from the world. On the contrary the Spirit's transcendence is the very basis of maintaining the possibility of the Spirit's unique engagement with us.⁸⁰ For, the Spirit always remains other than those who are encountered.⁸¹ It is the very otherness of the Spirit's relation to human beings which allows us the freedom to respond to God through the Spirit in a personal way. In fact, we would suggest that in the Spirit's relation to us he remains other than and not possessed by human beings in a unique way; there is no other relationship which continues to operate with the freedom with which the Spirit relates to human beings.⁸² The

77 The immanence of Christ's entry into the world does not deny that he too transcends creation.

78 Gunton, *Theology Through the Theologians*. p. 108, echoing this point states that 'the Spirit may be active within the world, but he does not become identical with any part of the world'.

79 It is important at this point to understand that transcendence should not be understood in spatial terms. For the Spirit who is always transcendent is nonetheless immanently involved in our lives. See McFadyen's discussion of this point in *Sins of Praise*..

80 Gunton *Theology Through the Theologians* p.189, suggests that 'many of the characteristic weaknesses of the Western tradition derive from a failure to maintain the personal transcendence of the Holy Spirit. The reason is that if we cannot conceive the Spirit as free lord, then we may succumb to the temptation of identifying him with some immanent causal force: with ecclesiastical or political institutions, or with some private experiences and beliefs.'

81 We would agree with Gunton in *Theology through the Theologians* p.119, that the terms transcendent and immanent are problematic and might better be expressed as otherness and relation.

82 Hans Hueber, 'The Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture' in *The Ecumenical Review*, 41:3, July 1989 p.335, reminds us that neither Paul nor John work out a fully developed pneumatology because the Spirit remains other.

Spirit enters into the matrix of our world in an intimate way so as to reshape our apperceptions and by this creates the freedom for persons to respond to the world, not simply out of necessary or causal relations but in response to God's desires for us.

The uniqueness of the Spirit's relation to us is that the Spirit remains distinct from us-- the Spirit can never be objectified. Yet, this makes the close relation between Christ and the Spirit all the more important. Apart from the Son and his objectively entering the created world we could not relate to God 'personally'. That there are *two hands* of God, Christ and the Spirit, means that God encounters us in two different but totally interdependent ways; there is only one economy of God.⁸³ We cannot encounter God, come to know him, through the Son or the Spirit exclusively. Personal encounter depends upon another engaging with us *both* objectively and subjectively. We must have a context in which to enter into the relation and this context in terms of the Spirit is the Corporate Christ. Zizioulas' close identification of Christ and the Church provides the concrete historical basis of God's engagement with the world. This identification with a particular, historical community is saved from institutionalism through the work of the Spirit. It is the otherness of the Spirit which continually calls the Church forward to find its identity not solely in history but in the eschaton which is realised in the present through the eucharistic community. The mystery of the Church is that God relates to us through the body of Christ which is instituted by Christ and constituted by the Spirit. It is only the body of Christ, the Church, which exists as a community in and through which the reality of God may be known. This is not to say that the Spirit cannot be at work in the world 'outside' of the Church. But, to affirm, with Gunton, that '[i]f the Spirit relates created being to God -- thus making them holy, in the sense of finally acceptable to God -- he achieves this through the Son, the mediator of creation, for there is no other way'.⁸⁴

The Spirit's leading us into all truth (John 16:13) provides one example of the role the Spirit plays. (In referring to this role we need to be careful to differentiate our argument from those who would see the primary role of the Spirit as

83 Fee, *God's Empowering Presence*. p.837, insists 'that the risen Christ and the Spirit are clearly distinct from one another'. He is careful to discount the Spirit Christologies which would suggest that the Spirit is nothing more than the person of Christ. It is vital that we with the Apostle Paul, affirm the distinction of the persons whose operation is nonetheless a single operation'.

84 Gunton, *The Promise*, 2nd Ed. preface p. xxviii.

engagement with the cognitive self.) The role of the Spirit in particularising a person involves, in part, that the Spirit reorients a person's apperceptions in perhaps much the same way as an independent third party might serve to connect two persons who are locked in an argument. The difference is that the Spirit is able to enter into the process at a much more immediate and intimate level than any human arbitrator. The Spirit is able to rework our apperceptions without becoming part of the matrix which constitutes them. In a very real sense the Spirit is the one who is able to function in the role often associated with the 'inner' self for the Spirit is one who is intimate with us and with God. In this sense Lossky and Volf are right in recognising that the Spirit relates to the person in a very intimate and immediate way. The difficulty, which we have already noted, is that the independent inner self which they are referring to simply does not exist. The Spirit does not engage with the consciousness of the inner self as though that existed or could exist in isolation from the social constitution of the person. Therefore the Spirit's relation to us is not the relation to an inner private self.

4.1. Relations and Interiority

Returning to our discussion of the Church, we would argue that models of the Church, such as Volf and Lossky use, which posit the interiority of the Spirit as the basis for the transformation of the world, are grounded in a somewhat Gnostic assumption that we can step back from this world into a position of objectivity. Lossky sought to hold together a basis for freedom with a concrete historical instituting, yet, he failed to hold the two together. What we are left with is the protological unity and origin of the institution and the free transcendence of the person.⁸⁵ The paradox between the institution and 'personal' freedom is, if anything, increased. If we believe that we can encounter the Spirit in an interior encounter which allows us to separate ourselves from the relations which are negative or institutional then we are engaging in the same kind of gnosticism which suggests that we can escape the matrix of relations which constitute us. While recognising that our relations with each other need to be addressed, Lossky and Volf continue to treat relations as exterior rather than intrinsic and constitutive of person, in so far as the emphasis is put upon the need to 'choose' right relations.

⁸⁵ Once again, Lossky's notion depends upon a capacity for objectivity which is based upon a dualist understanding of human existence. *MT* p.178.

Zizioulas, in turn, is in danger of allowing his concern with individualism to shape his thesis. In denying the possibility of an independent interiority to the person we would also affirm that the Spirit's relation to the person gives them the freedom to respond to be reconstituted in a network of relations alongside of their biological relations. This freedom is not therefore a freedom to enter into relations as though the biological constitution was not relational, but to transform the relations in which a person exists. It is all too easy to suggest, with the personalists, that the solution to individualism is simply that human persons need to recognise and accept that they are not autonomous but in fact are part of a greater whole -- a relational matrix. As we discussed in chapter five of this thesis Zizioulas' failure to distinguish adequately between human finitude and the corruption which has resulted from human sinfulness can serve to deny the relational matrix of the biological hypostasis.⁸⁶ As a result there is the danger of suggesting, in his correlation of salvation with a relational ontology, that the transformation implicit in becoming persons is a move from autonomous individuality to a relational matrix. One must be very careful to affirm that salvation is not about an entry into a relational matrix but a transformation of the relational matrix which already exists.⁸⁷ Apart from this affirmation it is all too easy to reduce the notion of a relational ontology to a personalist call to value relationships without the recognition that it is the corruption of our relations which needs to be addressed.

4.2. Transformation and Growth

This brings us to the point of saying a few words regarding transformation or sanctification. For Lossky, the transformation of the person or ascent to God should be the goal of those in the Church.

[N]evertheless, this adoption [in the Holy Spirit and the Church] is not the final goal, for there is yet a narrower circle within the Church itself -- that of the saints, of 'those who have understanding'... --who enter into union with God.⁸⁸

Zizioulas, in contrast, spends very little time developing the idea or basis by which we might discuss transformation. In fact, the little time that he does devote to it is to discount the idea of a transformation leading to individual holiness. Returning to our discussion about inwardness it is clear that the idea of

⁸⁶ This is discussed in more detail in chapters five and six.

⁸⁷ Daniel W. Hardy, 'Created and Redeemed Sociality' in *On Being the Church: Essays on the Christian Community*, eds. Colin Gunton and Daniel Hardy, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989) pp. 21-47, argues this same point.

⁸⁸ MT p.178.

a private inner union with the Spirit which would lead to the sanctification of the individual is impossible unless we subscribe to an inner/outer dualism. But, that is not to say that there is no room for a concept of transformation. Indeed,

'the cry for transformation and sanctification corresponds to the deepest longings and desires of the human being. The world as it is, our existence, as it actually is, needs transformation. We cannot be content with things as they are. We must change ourselves and the way things are; but how?'⁸⁹

Where for Lossky and Volf the how of the transformation of the world follows on the transformation of the individual, for Zizioulas the transformation of persons is bound up with the transformation of the Church.⁹⁰ 'Should we not look for a transformation of our ecclesial communities before we speak of sharing holiness and sanctification?'⁹¹

Part of the difficulty is surely rooted in the understanding of holiness. The idea of individual holiness which has been a central notion in certain parts of the Christian tradition is for Zizioulas an impossibility. 'There is no such thing as individual holiness'.⁹² In the last chapter we mentioned the idea that holiness has often been perceived as a completion of the individual or inner wholeness. In some senses this appears to follow from the definition of holiness as being set apart for God. That means that to speak of an individual holiness suggests that we can be whole persons, set apart for God in ourselves. There are two problems with this idea: the first is that we are irrevocably a part of this world in so far as our very existence is tied in with and constituted by the relational matrix of this world. To be 'in the world but not of the world' means that we remain integrally related with the world while living in the freedom the Spirit gives to us to have our 'constitution' shaped by God rather than the world. The second is that our calling is that 'we are there in the world as the priests of creation endowed with the privilege of referring creation back to its Creator.'⁹³ If our calling, and our own 'wholeness' involves referring creation back to its creator, how can we claim any degree of holiness through an inner piety or righteousness? Is there any sense of right living that exists apart from our role within the whole of creation?

⁸⁹Zizioulas, 'Come Holy Spirit Sanctify Our lives' p.1.

⁹⁰For Lossky transformation happens to those within the Church yet, the transformation of the individual continues to be the basis of the transformation of the world.

⁹¹ Zizioulas, 'Come Holy Spirit Sanctify Our lives' p.2.

⁹² Zizioulas, 'Come Holy Spirit Sanctify Our lives' p.2.

⁹³ 'The human calling, as made concrete in the incarnation of the mediator, is, simply put, to enable the creation to praise its maker.' Colin Gunton, *Christ and Creation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1992)p.102.

We cannot separate ourselves from the world for we are constituted in relation to it. What we can do is challenge and reorient those relations to the world. Not by obtaining an objective distance, which is complemented with individual holiness or wholeness, but through allowing the Spirit to reshape our relations to each other. The Spirit does not engage with us in an inner private relation that we might then engage with the world as though we become other than the world. It is the Spirit who remains other, yet who engages with us to bring us to maturity in so far as we are irreducibly related to the world.

A distinction must be made between the terms 'completion' and 'maturity'. For Zizioulas completion is not and should not be the expectation of the Christian life. It would seem that for him, completion inevitably carries implications of autonomy. In contrast, the term 'maturity' does not lead to the same implications. We may speak of a person maturing without suggesting a developing autonomy or individual completeness; this resonates with Irenaeus' notion of recapitulation. The person who has entered into the Church through baptism has been 'recapitulated' into a relation with God by which they are once again able to grow up or mature into all the fullness which God has intended for them. This 'growth' has no bearing on their 'being' for being or ontology is not determined by maturity, rather it is *the premise* by which a person may mature. Growth is not about moving towards a point of completion.⁹⁴ Although Zizioulas does not elaborate on a process of maturation, we would suggest that his model by placing growth outside of the issue of 'being' offers the opportunity for true freedom to grow. No longer does maturing carry the implications of being or non being, instead it is simply the possibility of growing more fully into the reality which God has called us to and has realised in the tension of the already/not yet.

Zizioulas' concern to overturn models of individual transformation and growth can mean that at times he seems to discount the role of the human persons as agents for change within the ecclesial community and indeed the world. Although he has not devoted much time to describing how the particular person might be seen to play a role in the transformation of the community it is, in our estimation, not because he does not envision such a role but because he is primarily concerned to overturn the very individualistic ways in which this is often understood. He holds with the Orthodox tradition that,

94 Lossky echoes this thought as well when he refers to Nyssa's concept of eternal progression. For Lossky perfection is not about arriving at a state of completion. 'The more perfect one becomes, the more one is aware of one's own imperfection'. *MT* p.205.

a spirituality involving a deep respect for nature is strongly conditioned by the view that nature acquires sacredness only in and through the human person. This gives humanity decisive importance and responsibility. A human being is a priest of creation as he or she freely turns it into a vehicle of communion with God and with others.⁹⁵

To speak of the Church as the instrument for God's change in the world is for Zizioulas to speak of the person's role as well. For Zizioulas to speak of the person as an autonomous agent apart from the Church fails to account for our relational constitution. This should not be taken to mean that the person cannot act as an agent but to affirm that the person lives integrally in the relations which constitute him or her.

Conclusion

Zizioulas' ecclesiology spells out the particulars of his theological anthropology as it is firmly grounded in his understanding of the relational dynamic of the three persons of the Trinity. The comprehensiveness of his scheme is at times overly idealistic and the scope of his claims sometimes overlooks the complexity of the issues (as we witnessed in chapter six of this thesis). These concerns are aggravated by the unsystematic presentation of his argument. Nonetheless there is a real coherence to his position which challenges us to look at ecclesiological issues in a new light. Furthermore his close identification of 'communion' with the eucharistic community serves to ground his whole thesis concretely without giving in to the dualism which so often arises between institution and event or history and eschatology.

The logic of Zizioulas' understanding of an ontology of relations is carried through to the specifics of God's engagement with the Church and the world. Zizioulas makes it clear that in speaking of Christ and the Church we are forced to speak at the same time of the Spirit's relation to Christ and the Spirit's relation to the persons who constitute the Church. To say that Christ entered into our world means that he entered into the dynamic of created existence in a permanent way. The Spirit's role, as the one who remains 'other', is to again and again transform that dynamic of created existence through creating communion in union with Christ. The distinction of the roles of the Son and the Spirit allows the eschatological role of the Spirit to be grounded in the historical incarnation of Christ because the Son and the Spirit are constituted in relation to each other and the Father. The particularity of Christ and the Spirit like the particularity of other

95 Zizioulas, 'Ecological Asceticism: a Cultural Revolution' in *Sourozh* 67 1997 p.23.

persons is not threatened by their constitutive relations but guaranteed by God's being as three persons in relation.

The whole thrust of the relational dynamic of Zizioulas' scheme allows no room for a model of private or interior faith. However, the rejection of a 'private' interiority is not a denial of the importance of particularity nor is it a denial of human cognitive ability; rather, it is to suggest that the basis in which particularity is understood must be challenged to more adequately reflect human situatedness. Salvation in offering the possibility of enduring particularity does not require simply the change of our own inwardness but the transformation of the relations which constitute us.

Conclusion

In seeking to understand how theological anthropology might be understood from the context of the doctrine of the Trinity we have begun by returning to the formative definitions of the Trinity by the Church Fathers. Chapter one of this thesis describes the Cappadocian understanding of the God who is one ousia/three hypostases as the basis for a relational ontology. It continues by affirming the distinction between God *ad intra* and God *ad extra* as a fundamental distinction not only to uphold the freedom of God but also to affirm the freedom that God allows to the world. This distinction is vital in establishing a relational ontology that holds unity and particularity together.

In the debate over the concept of the Father as cause, in chapter two, we affirmed the need to describe an ordering of the divine persons as true to God *ad intra* as well as God *ad extra*. Recognising the possible danger of using a concept of causality we sought to highlight the need to allow for an ordering to the persons of the Trinity that respects the 'priority' of the person of the Father. The affirmation of an ordering to God *ad intra* challenges us not to project human notions of equality on to the divine persons and allows that the transcendence of God must always call into question the presuppositions of ontological models. The paradox of an ordering that does not deny equality raises significant questions regarding the modern concern with an equality that tends towards homogeneity.

In chapters 3 to 5, we turned to examine John Zizioulas' theological anthropology in the context of modern thought. His understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity has significant resonance with the Cappadocians' model in spite of the fact that he is unashamedly operating in a modern context and is taking the implications of the doctrine much further than they did. Yet, in spite of Zizioulas' willingness to move beyond the tradition, he lacks a systematic presentation of his thesis, which can cloud the central ideas of an already complex thesis. Furthermore, in developing the Cappadocian doctrines there are points where Zizioulas is too strongly influenced by existentialist thought. Not only must we take account of the influence of existentialist and personalist thought but we must also seek to understand Zizioulas' relationship with Eastern Orthodoxy; a failure to appreciate his Orthodox roots will inevitably lead to misunderstanding his position. In establishing these influences we sought to clarify some aspects of his model.

Fundamental to Zizioulas' insights is a desire to work towards an ontology of communion which challenges our understanding of personhood for both divine and human persons. The impact of his thought has been significant in part due to a modern interest in relational models of being. Therefore our concern is not simply to promote his thesis as a relational understanding of reality but to develop and express the aspects of his position which serve to distinguish it from some popular expressions of relationality. Rather than comparing Zizioulas' model solely to other relational ontologies we have compared him with other theologians who have attempted to understand the doctrine of the Trinity as foundational to a contemporary theological anthropology.

Two primary concerns which we have discussed in this thesis are closely connected. The first involves the need for Zizioulas to distinguish carefully between human finiteness and the corruption which has resulted from the fall. His description of a transcendence of human limitations can tend towards a denial of human situatedness. As a result he can appear to be proposing that salvation involves a transcendence of individuality in order to enter into a relational mode of being. To suggest that salvation involves an entry into relationality rather than a transformation of our corrupted relations distorts the understanding of the human situation and the process of redemption.

The second area, which is the question of how relations and relationships are to be understood, has been one of our primary concerns. The interest in the place of relations in our modern world has been evidenced in many different fields. We have noted that Zizioulas has been influenced by existentialism, particularly in the form of personalism. Yet we have also argued that Zizioulas is not simply defending the importance of relations for their own sake, nor does his understanding of a relational ontology inevitably lead to a idealist monism. His defence of the doctrine of the Trinity anchors his understanding of relations in Trinitarian theology and differentiates his model from other relational models such as that of Buber. Furthermore with his understanding of the eucharistic community Zizioulas establishes a solid basis from which his whole theoretical discussion proceeds.

Nonetheless, Zizioulas' model would benefit from a more thorough development of his understanding of the context of relations. His failure to distinguish between a transcendence of corrupt human relations and a transcendence of human limitedness is further confused by his unwillingness

to describe the juridical element to the human/divine relation, as discussed in chapter 6. The ordering of the persons which we described in chapter two must have implications for us here as we attempt to understand a relationality which is qualified yet not displaced by a moral ordering.

In the discussion of person and relation Zizioulas has directed our attention towards the context in which particularity is to be understood. In chapter 7 we looked at this context through an understanding of the dynamic relations of Christ and the Spirit to human persons. The relation of the Spirit to the human person must be foundational to the enablement of particularity. We have argued that this relation should not be understood as exclusive, through an emphasis upon the interiority of the person, yet it must allow for the freedom which is given to the particular; not a freedom of choice which depends upon a capacity for independent objectivity but a freedom to be constituted in relation to God and the world. Zizioulas' concern is to talk about the importance of freedom within the context of the Church, the corporate Christ, as a eucharistic community with an eschatological orientation. His ecclesiology challenges the tendency to define the Church as either institution or event; it also provides a locus in which the concepts of person and relation may be grounded.

Our discussion of theological anthropology, which began with the Cappadocian understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, has finished by looking at two important areas, ecclesiology and hamartiology. Zizioulas' theological anthropology provides the basis for a fruitful discussion of many issues. Nonetheless, the understanding of the relations of Christ and the Spirit to the people of God and an understanding of the implications of the fall are of central importance in working out a balanced understanding of persons and relations. By examining these two areas and highlighting some other important issues we have endeavoured to advance the understanding of theological anthropology.

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